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Why Do They Stay? Building a Conceptual Model to Understand Worker Retention and  
Turnover in Public Child Welfare

By

Amy Denise Benton

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Social Welfare

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Susan Stone, Chair

Professor Michael Austin

Professor Karlene Roberts

Sherrill Clark, Ph.D.

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## Abstract

### Why Do They Stay? Building a Conceptual Model to Understand Worker Retention and Turnover in Public Child Welfare

by

Amy Denise Benton

Doctor of Philosophy in Social Welfare

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Susan Stone, Chair

Retention of public child welfare workers has been a recognized problem and a topic of interest among child welfare researchers for many years. However, findings in the literature are conflicting and the research is largely atheoretical. While many variables relevant to retention and turnover have been identified, the literature lacks explanation of how the variables are related.

The goals of this study were, thus, twofold. The first objective was to build a conceptual model using qualitative data generated from interviews of child welfare workers, theoretical works, as well empirical research which might explain retention and turnover specifically in the field of child welfare. The second objective was to test the conceptual model using logistic regression techniques on a large quantitative sample (N=1,121). This study employs mixed methods and draws its data from a larger ongoing study, utilizing a voluntary sample of child welfare workers who have participated in a Title IV-E MSW program in the state of California, have completed their work obligation period, and have either chosen to remain in public child welfare (stayers) or leave (leavers).

Results suggest that the conceptual model successfully identifies the complexity of the process that leads to retention and turnover behavior. Variables from three categories (individual, organizational, and response to job factors) are identified as predicting retention. Previous county employment, supervisor support, and client-related stress were all related to predicting retention. The implications of the study findings for social work education, agency practice, theory building and research are offered.



## Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Jacqueline Benton. My mom instilled both a love of learning and a desire to help others in me at a very young age. She then worked many years at a miserable job so that I could attend Vassar College, which was a rewarding introduction to higher education. Without my mom's inspiration, support, and unwavering faith in me, I might not have strived for and achieved a Ph.D in Social Welfare.

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I would also like to express my gratitude to the California Social Work Education Center (CalSWEC) and its staff. This research would not have been possible without the opportunities provided by CalSWEC for learning about the public child welfare workforce and for accessing a rich and complex dataset. Likewise, this research would not have been possible without the work of former and current graduate student researchers, who conducted interviews and entered survey data. I am especially grateful to Susan Jacquet for her guidance and support during the analysis stage, and to Rick Smith for his illumination of statistical procedures. Additionally, I would like to thank Chris Mathias for her unwavering faith that I would complete this project.

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## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

### **Problem Statement**

The retention of qualified, competent staff has been a longstanding challenge for child welfare agencies, with reports identifying the problem as early as 1960 (Powell & York, 1992; Tollen, 1960). Public child welfare agencies across the nation continue to struggle with worker turnover, with annual rates ranging from 20-40% nationally (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2003). In a child welfare workforce survey conducted by the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA, 2005), 18 states reported a total of 4,011 frontline worker turnovers for one year, averaging 334 turnovers per month. Vacancy rates in public child welfare are also problematic. Nationwide, reported vacancy rates range from 8.5-9.8%, with time to fill positions ranging from seven to thirteen weeks (APHSA, 2005).

Child welfare worker turnover is also considered an issue in California. The statewide annual turnover rate for 2006-2007 was 8.6% (Clark, Smith, & Mathias, 2009). This rate is considerably lower than reported national averages, but regional rates run as high as 18% and individual counties report turnover rates as high as 62% (Clark et al., 2009; Mathias, Benton, & Jones, 2009). A workforce study conducted by the California Social Work Education Center indicated that 58 counties reported a total of 577 vacant child welfare worker positions in 2008 (Clark et al., 2009). Additionally, counties have reported an average of 3.66 months to fill vacant positions (Clark & Fulcher, 2005).

High turnover, reduced retention, and high vacancy rates can be costly and have negative effects on agencies and clients. There are financial costs to the organization related to the time and resources needed for the continual recruitment and training of new workers. One study estimated the financial costs of turnover as \$10,000 annually (in 1995 dollars) per vacant position (Graef & Hill, 2000). Other reports have indicated costs ranging from 33% to 70% of the position's annual salary (APSHA, 2005; Flower, McDonald, & Sumski, 2005).

In addition to the financial costs, turnover has a negative effect on agency effectiveness as well as the job conditions and morale of remaining employees. When trained and experienced staff leave, the knowledge and skills that they acquired often leave with them, reducing the overall service capacity of the agency (Balfour & Neff, 1993; Drake & Yadama, 1996). Furthermore, increased workload for the remaining staff increases the levels of frustration and anxiety. Workers in such understaffed agencies experience insufficient time to work with clients or to review cases with supervisors (Hess, Folaron, & Jefferson, 1992). Chronic turnover can lower the morale among staff who may start to question their own decisions about remaining on the job (Cahalane & Sites, 2008).

Along with agencies and coworkers, clients also feel the effects of worker turnover and inadequate staffing. While there has been little research done connecting worker retention with client outcomes, there is a recognized need for a professional, skilled workforce (Leighninger, 2002; Zlotnik, Strand, & Anderson, 2009) which is depleted with frequent turnover, leaving clients to work with less trained staff (Bednar, 2003; Hess et al., 1992). Service provision also becomes impaired when remaining staff have higher caseloads and less time to make home

visits. One study cited high worker caseload or worker turnover as problems contributing to disruption of reunification in 67% of cases (Hess et al., 1992). Multiple changes in caseworkers due to turnover, may also damage client trust and rapport (Powell & York, 1992). One study found a significant relationship between number of caseworkers and permanency for children. As the number of workers assigned to clients increased, the rate for achieving permanency dropped (Flower et al., 2005). Furthermore, turnover and vacant positions can cause delay in the timeliness of investigations, which can be detrimental to children at risk who are not removed from unsafe homes. Along with the increased risk of harm to children, delayed investigations interferes with states' ability to meet federal guidelines (US GAO, 2003).

### **The Title IV-E Program**

Given the stressful nature of child welfare work, difficulties with recruitment and retention of staff may not be surprising (Specht & Courtney, 1994). However, given the costs of chronic turnover, efforts to increase retention are crucial. The Title IV-E education stipend program is one way that many states are looking to improve their child welfare worker tenure. Title IV-E originated as part of the Child Welfare and Adoption Assistance Act of 1980 (P.L. 96-272). The federal program provides funding to states for the education and training of current and future child welfare workers. The goal is to improve the recruitment and retention of skilled, competent workers by increasing the number of workers who receive specialized education focused on child welfare. Individuals may receive a Title IV-E stipend while getting a Bachelors in Social Work (BSW) or a Masters in Social Work (MSW), with the stipulation that they will make a year for year commitment to work in public child welfare after graduation. Therefore, if a participant receives the Title IV-E stipend for two years, the contractual obligation to work in public child welfare is two years.

Title IV-E is the primary source of federal funding to support the improvement of the child welfare workforce (NASW, 2003) and has shown some promising results. Research indicates that Title IV-E programs are successful in preparing MSWs to work in public child welfare (Jones & Okamura, 2000; Vonk, Newsome, & Bronson, 2003). Studies also suggest that Title IV-E also improves retention, indicating longer tenures for Title IV-E participants than non Title IV-E participants (Jones, 2002; Rosenthal & Waters, 2006).

A key strategy for provision and management of Title IV-E programs at the state level is through the formation of university-agency partnerships (Vonk et al, 2003; Zlotnik, 2002). The California Social Work Education Center (CalSWEC) is one such partnership and was formed in 1990. Currently, CalSWEC is the largest state coalition of social work educators and practitioners in the United States. This consortium is comprised of the state's 20 accredited graduate schools of social work, 58 county departments of social services and mental health, the California Department of Social Services, the California Mental Health Directors' Association, and the California Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers. CalSWEC administers the Title IV-E stipend program contracts to all of the graduate schools of social work in California and coordinates in-service training for child welfare workers in the 58 counties through its work with the four regional training academies and the Inter-University Consortium (IUC) in Los Angeles County. The mission of CalSWEC is to assure effective, culturally competent service delivery by increasing 1) the number of county/state child welfare

workers with a MSW; 2) retention among public child welfare workers; and, 3) the ethnic proportion of child welfare workers who represent the children and families who interact with the system (<http://calswec.berkeley.edu>).

CalSWEC conducts several evaluation projects with the goals of identifying, understanding, and disseminating best practices in social work education, training and practice with a focus on public child welfare. CalSWEC has been conducting an evaluation of the Title IV-E program since the first cohort of Title IV-E supported MSWs graduated in 1993. Each year as a new cohort completes their contractual obligations, CalSWEC contacts them with a request to fill out an online or paper survey which identifies a participant's status as remaining in or leaving public child welfare as well as exploring factors that may influence participants' retention. Participants are also offered the opportunity to participate in a telephone interview which further explores their experiences in the Title IV-E program and public child welfare, as well as reasons for staying or leaving.

### **Current State of the Research**

Turnover has been a topic of interest among researchers for many years, and there are a number of studies that explore factors related to worker turnover and retention in child welfare settings (DePanfilis & Zlotnik, 2008; Bernotavicz, 2006; Mor Barak, Nissly, & Levin, 2001). Yet the research is largely inconclusive and is mired by inconsistent definitions and conflicting findings. Furthermore, on closer review, the number of studies which utilize turnover or retention as an outcome is more limited; with many examining only intent to stay or leave. The use of intent to stay or leave as proxy for actual retention or turnover behavior is questionable. "Results of studies using intent to leave as the sole withdrawal criterion...may not generalize well to situations involving actual turnover" (Tett & Meyer, 1993, p.280).

Most importantly, the child welfare workforce literature is largely atheoretical. While many variables relevant to retention and turnover have been identified, the literature lacks explanation of how the variables are related (Deery-Schmitt & Todd, 1995). Among child welfare studies that utilized actual turnover as the dependent variable, Smith (2005) used social exchange theory to explore the influence of supervisor support, organizational support, and intrinsic job value on worker retention. This is the only theory-informed research that reflects the transparency needed for how or why variables were selected for study and the need for an identifiable framework for replicating findings. Increased identification and use of theory in child welfare research could advance the literature's ability to explain the complex process involved in decisions to stay or leave.

### **Study Purpose**

The purpose of the current study is to consider the multiple correlates of child welfare retention/ turnover simultaneously and to identify a model that describes the process. The current study draws its data from CalSWEC's larger ongoing study, utilizing a voluntary sample of child welfare workers (N=1,121) who have participated in the CalSWEC Title IV-E MSW program, have completed their work obligation period between 1996 and 2008, and have either chosen to remain in public child welfare (stayers) or leave (leavers). The study uses a mixed methods



design, utilizing both CalSWEC's qualitative interview data and quantitative survey data. The qualitative data, along with an analysis of relevant theoretical and empirical literature, is used to build a conceptual model of turnover and retention for public child welfare. The quantitative data is then used to test the usefulness of the proposed conceptual model.

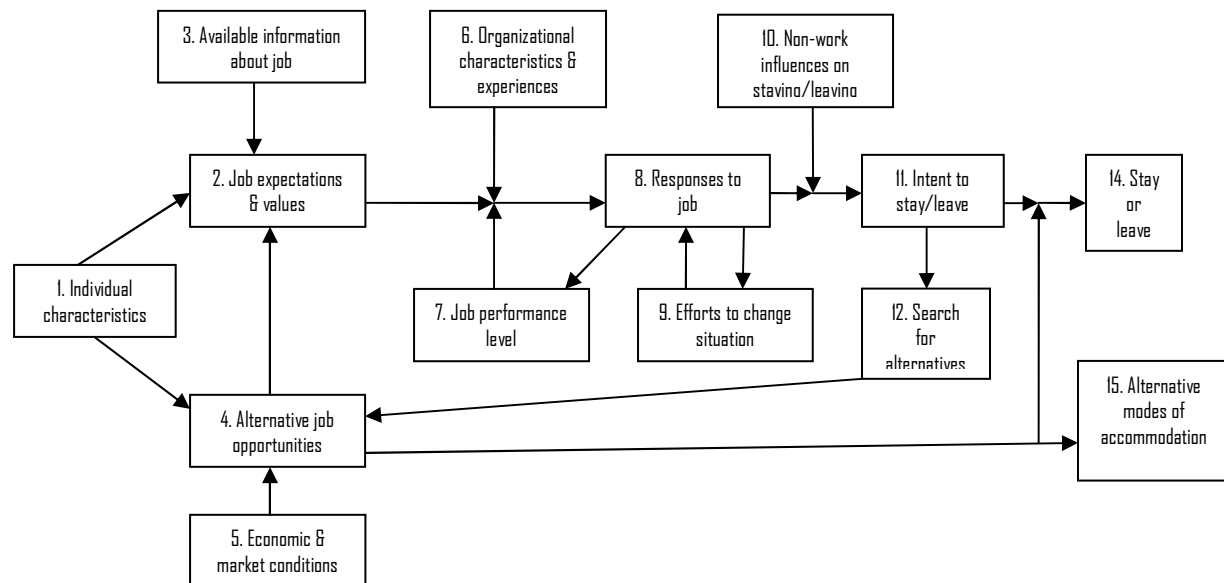
Responding to the call for more theory-based research (Strolin, McCarthy, & Caringi, 2007) this study aims to 1) create and assess evidence for a conceptual model that helps to explain turnover and retention specifically in the field of public child welfare and 2) contribute to knowledge base regarding worker retention by identifying strategies that may be used by public child welfare agencies to retain child welfare workers. Given that the study population consists of specially trained MSW graduates, the study also identifies possible areas for universities to improve their Title IV-E programs.

The study begins to build a conceptual model by examining a comprehensive model of turnover as well as other theoretical literature from the field of management (Chapter 2). Chapter 3 then explores the current empirical child welfare literature. The next step is to utilize the rich information provided by CalSWEC's qualitative interview data to understand retention and to assess where there are similarities and differences between the theoretical and empirical literature and this study sample (Chapter 4). Chapter 5 presents the proposed conceptual model which is built from assessing the qualitative data and the theoretical and empirical research. Chapters 6 and 7 describe the methods and results of the quantitative analysis, testing the proposed conceptual model using CalSWEC's survey data. Finally, Chapter 8 offers conclusions and implications for Title IV-E programs, child welfare agencies, further theory building and research.

## CHAPTER 2. A COMPREHENSIVE MODEL PLUS RELEVANT THEORIES AND CONSTRUCTS ASSOCIATED WITH TURNOVER AND RETENTION

Although it is not heavily drawn upon in child welfare research, there is a substantial conceptual knowledge base on turnover (Deery-Schmitt & Todd, 1995; Mitchell & Lee, 2001; Mueller & Price, 1990). A common theme across this literature is the notion that turnover is determined by multiple and multi-level factors at the individual, organizational, and local market levels. To date, Mowday and colleagues (1981, 1982) provide the most comprehensive integration of this literature. The model is based on an analysis of previous reviews of turnover studies in organizational behavior and industrial psychology and builds on the previous research to understand the turnover process (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982; Steers & Mowday, 1981). Figure 1. below provides a visual representation of the turnover model. The following discussion identifies and explains the various elements of the model.

Figure 2.1 Model of Employee Turnover



Adapted from Mowday, Porter, & Steers (1982) *Employee-Organization Linkages*, p.124.

The model starts with the individual worker (box 1 in Figure 2.1) and his/her job expectations and values (2). The worker's expectations and values are based on three factors: their individual characteristics (e.g. age, education), information available about the current job (3) and information available about job alternatives (4), with alternative job options being influenced by economic conditions (5) (Mowday et al., 1982). The model also considers the interaction of job expectations and values with organizational characteristics and experiences (6) as well as job performance (7). This section of the model includes the constructs of met expectations, role ambiguity and role conflict. The model then notes that the interaction of job expectations, organizational characteristics and job performance influences responses to job (8). There is a feedback loop indicating that worker response to job can in turn influence their job performance and organizational experiences (Mowday et al., 1982). Response to job involves the constructs of job satisfaction and job stress.

The final segment relates responses to job with intentions to stay or leave (11) and actual turnover behavior (14). The factors that can influence the path from job responses to intent include efforts to change the situation (9) and non-work factors (10). A worker's attempt to change the dissatisfying aspects of the job and how those attempts are addressed by the organization can either support or alter current job attitudes. Non-work factors include spouse and family considerations as well as convenience (job is near child's school, job requires a short commute). Finally, the path from intention to actual behavior is moderated by the success (or failure) of alternative job searches (12). If the worker is unable to find alternative job options then he or she may display alternative accommodation methods such as increased absenteeism (13) (Mowday et al., 1982).

### **Constructs for Understanding Worker Experiences**

The constructs described in this section further illuminate our understanding of the integrated turnover model and its applicability for child welfare workers. Relevant constructs include 1) met expectations, 2) role ambiguity, 3) role conflict, 4) job satisfaction, and 5) job stress.

#### **Met Expectations**

Met expectations, reflects the interaction between *job expectations* and *organizational characteristics & experiences* in the integrated model, and can include expectations about job structure, environment and rewards. "The concept of met expectations may be viewed as the discrepancy between what a person encounters on the job in the way of positive and negative experiences and what he[she] expected to encounter" (Porter & Steers, 1973, p.152). Therefore, it is not the absolute value of a condition but whether the absolute value matches the worker's assumptions (Mitchell & Lee, 2001). For example, one worker may be satisfied with a specific salary while another worker may not. Porter and Steers (1973) suggest that the degree of met expectations is central to the decision to leave a job. The more realistic the expectations acquired by a worker about the nature of a job and the rewards, the more likely she or he is to remain on the job.

#### **Role Ambiguity and Role Conflict**

Role ambiguity and role conflict fit into the *organizational characteristics & experiences* element of the model. Role ambiguity is defined as a lack of clarity in what is expected from a worker, and can be influenced by the absence of a detailed, accurate job description. Role conflict refers to the existence of multiple roles that do not correspond well with each other or have conflicting responsibilities buried within one or more roles. Specht and Courtney (1994) suggest that social workers may find enforcing social control functions required by courts and agency policies (child safety) may conflict with the helping role inherent in social work (family preservation).

Role ambiguity has been linked to lowered job satisfaction in a number of studies (Porter & Steers, 1973). In a review of the job stress research, Cooper, Dewe, and O'Driscoll, (2001) indicate that there has been a consistent link between role ambiguity and job stress. However, the

link between role conflict and stress is not as strong. Given calls for more research on role conflict (Cooper et al., 2001), child welfare may be a particularly useful setting to examine the relationship of role conflict and job stress due to the demands placed on workers to accomplish paperwork in timely fashion while also maintaining high caseloads of vulnerable clients. While role ambiguity may be ameliorated by offering potential workers realistic job previews and detailed job descriptions, role conflict may be more difficult to mitigate. Given the nature of child welfare with its often competing responsibilities to society, governing bodies, and clients, a certain level of role conflict may be inevitable.

## **Job Satisfaction**

While related to expectations and experiences, job satisfaction fits within the *response to job* element of the integrated model. Job satisfaction is one of the most common variables studied in relation to worker turnover and retention. It has been defined as the degree to which a worker responds positively to a job (Landsman, 2001; Mueller, 2000). Furthermore, we can understand job satisfaction as the interplay of cognition and affect (Judge & Church, 2000). Job satisfaction is based on the worker's understanding of the job and his or her response to perceived job conditions. Some researchers suggest that job satisfaction is a strong predictor of turnover (Cotton & Tuttle, 1986; Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000; Mor Barak, Levin, Nissly, & Lane, 2006). However, several meta analyses of studies examining the job satisfaction-turnover relationship show weak effects with correlations ranging between -.19 and -.25 (Judge & Church, 2000; Mor Barak et al., 2001; Mueller, 2000). One methodological challenge may be whether job satisfaction is measured with a global statement or a scale that identifies various job facets. Several researchers have argued for the use of a multiple-item measure in order to achieve a multidimensional conceptualization of job satisfaction (Judge & Church, 2000; Mueller, 2000; Tett & Meyer, 1993).

## **Job Stress**

Job stress, which also fits into the integrated model's *response to job* element, has been linked with turnover. Job stress has been examined as a factor influencing job satisfaction (Jayaratne & Chess, 1984; Landsman, 2001). Yet, job stress can have a direct effect on turnover (Mor Barak et al., 2001) as well as indirectly through job satisfaction. As stated previously, job stress has been linked to role conflict and role ambiguity (Cooper et al., 2001). Additionally, person-environment fit is related to job stress; suggesting that a misfit between person and environment is what leads to stress (Cooper et al., 2001; Lait & Wallace, 2002). The importance of person-environment fit is understandable given that stress is subjective. Not everyone will find the same factors stressful, and reactions are connected to subjective perceptions of the factor and the individual's assessment of their ability to handle the stressor. However, there may be factors (e.g. being threatened by a client) that all workers will identify as a job stressor.

## **Theories to Explain Worker Behavior**

A number of theories exist which attempt to explain worker behaviors and responses to the job. The theories identified here explain relationships within the integrated model. Relevant

theories include motivation-hygiene, professional-organizational conflict, social exchange, and perceived organizational support.

### **Motivation-Hygiene Theory**

Motivation-hygiene theory examines the interaction between the *organizational characteristics & experiences* and *response to job* elements in the integrated model. The theory provides more depth to the elements of the model by distinguishing intrinsic and extrinsic job factors (*organizational characteristics & experiences*) and by separating job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction (*response to job*). Motivation-hygiene theory breaks the job down into two categories, motivation factors and hygiene factors. Motivation factors are those elements considered intrinsic to the job and include recognition, achievement, and the work itself. Hygiene factors are elements extrinsic to the job, representing the organizational environment and include elements such as supervision and salary (Herzberg, 1967; Kettner, 2002). The theory further defines job satisfaction and dissatisfaction as separate constructs and suggests that each set of factors (motivation and hygiene) have a unidirectional effect (Herzberg, 1967). In other words, the theory proposes that only motivation factors will influence job satisfaction and only hygiene factors will influence job dissatisfaction.

Motivation-hygiene theory has received criticism and research studies do not support the concept that job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are separate constructs. Rather, studies show that both hygiene (extrinsic) and motivation (intrinsic) factors influence both job satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Brenner, Carmack, & Weinstein, 1971; Miner, 2005). However, the categorizing of job factors as intrinsic and extrinsic for the exploration of job satisfaction/ dissatisfaction can still be useful for analyzing turnover. This focus is relevant to the current study because there are job factors that are inherent to the nature of the work (e.g., witnessing child maltreatment) and there are job factors that organizations control (e.g., supervision) and may be able to change. Thus it may be useful to organizations to understand which type of job factor has the greatest influence on worker satisfaction and retention.

### **Organizational-Professional Conflict**

Lait and Wallace (2002) propose a conceptual model that suggests that job stress is due to the conflict experienced by professionals employed in bureaucratic settings, and the unmet expectations that such conflict produces. These factors map onto the *job expectations*, *organizational characteristics & experiences* and *response to job* elements in the integrated model. An example of professional-bureaucratic conflict would be organizational policies and paperwork interfering with workers' time and ability to provide client services (Lait & Wallace, 2002). The organizational-professional conflict model implies that the absence of professional conditions (autonomy, collegiality, satisfaction from client interaction) and the presence of bureaucratic conditions (formalization, routinization, work overload) can increase unmet worker expectations as well as the degree of job stress (Lait & Wallace, 2002).

To support the organizational-professional conflict model, Lait and Wallace (2002) conducted a study assessing the presence of professional and bureaucratic conditions for human service workers in the field of developmental disabilities. Results indicated that all the

bureaucratic conditions, except formalization, had significant direct effect on job stress. All the professional conditions, except autonomy, had significant direct negative effects on job stress (Lait & Wallace, 2002). The lack of significance found for both autonomy as a professional condition and formalization as a bureaucratic condition may be connected. The complexities of child welfare client situations, as well as the various conflicting roles workers must play, may influence workers to be more comfortable with more procedures and less individual control of work (e.g., formalization may feel safe). While some formalization provides support, an overly formalized environment may still be detrimental because it reduces the amount of authority and discretion workers perceive they have which can lead to job stress (Cooper et al., 2001).

### **Social Exchange Theory**

Social exchange theory helps to illuminate the interactions identified in the integrated model which occur in the work setting. These interactions include the *job expectations*, *organizational characteristics & experiences*, *job performance*, and *response to job* elements. Furthermore, the theory also articulates how the interaction of these elements influences the *intent to stay/leave* and *stay or leave* behavior.

Social exchange theory can be broadly applied to any social interaction. The theory “starts with a simple metaphor involving two persons, each of whom provides benefits to the other, contingent upon benefits from the other” (Emerson, 1981, p. 32). This provision of benefits reflects a trade and involves an expectation of reciprocity (Blau, 1964; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Individuals will choose their associations based on rewards and will “adjust social conditions to achieve their ends” (Blau, 1964, p. 19).

In the agency setting, this theory suggests that workers have an expectation of a mutual exchange relationship with their workplace; the worker provides performance, commitment to the job, and retention in the agency in exchange for support and resources. If the expected rewards are not forthcoming, workers will adjust their condition by leaving and seeking out a different job setting to achieve rewards. Often supervisors represent the workplace side of an exchange and will influence workers’ perceptions of the exchange. Smith (2005) utilized a social exchange framework to analyze worker retention in child welfare settings, focusing on the influence of supervisor support, organizational conditions, as well as intrinsic job value. The study supports the importance of the supervisor for the exchange relationship, with supervisor support significantly related to the odds of retention, while organizational conditions were not (Smith, 2005).

### **Perceived Organizational Support**

Perceived organizational support (POS) also addresses the interactions in the turnover model which occur in the work setting, and include the *job expectations*, *organizational characteristics & experiences*, *job performance*, *response to job*, *intent to stay/leave*, and *stay or leave* elements. POS theory is grounded in social exchange theory with a specific focus on work settings. Similar to social exchange theory, worker behavior is based on an expected mutual exchange. POS theory emphasizes that workers develop a “global belief concerning the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about well being” (Rhoades &

Eisenberger, 2002, p. 698). This global perception about organizational support then influences worker satisfaction and willingness to stay in a job.

Antecedents of POS include supervisor support, organizational rewards, and job conditions (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Similar to social exchange theory, POS indicates that supervisor support is very important to worker behavior (Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski, & Rhoades, 2002). Additionally, POS suggests that the other job conditions are also influential to employee attitudinal and behavioral responses. However, Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) suggested that rewards and job conditions would have a weaker effect than supervisor support on POS. Their meta-analysis supports this hypothesis with supervisor support having a stronger effect than organizational rewards ( $r = .51$ ) and job conditions ( $r = .43$ ).

An important component of POS is the idea that stressors will reduce POS to the extent that they are perceived as controllable by organization, and include role conflict, role ambiguity, work overload (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). The suggestion that response to stressors will be influenced by the perception of the organization's role in controlling them is especially relevant to the current study due to the nature of the child welfare job. For instance, the task of removing children is inherent to the job and not controllable by organization. However, caseload size will be perceived as a job factor that organizations can change.

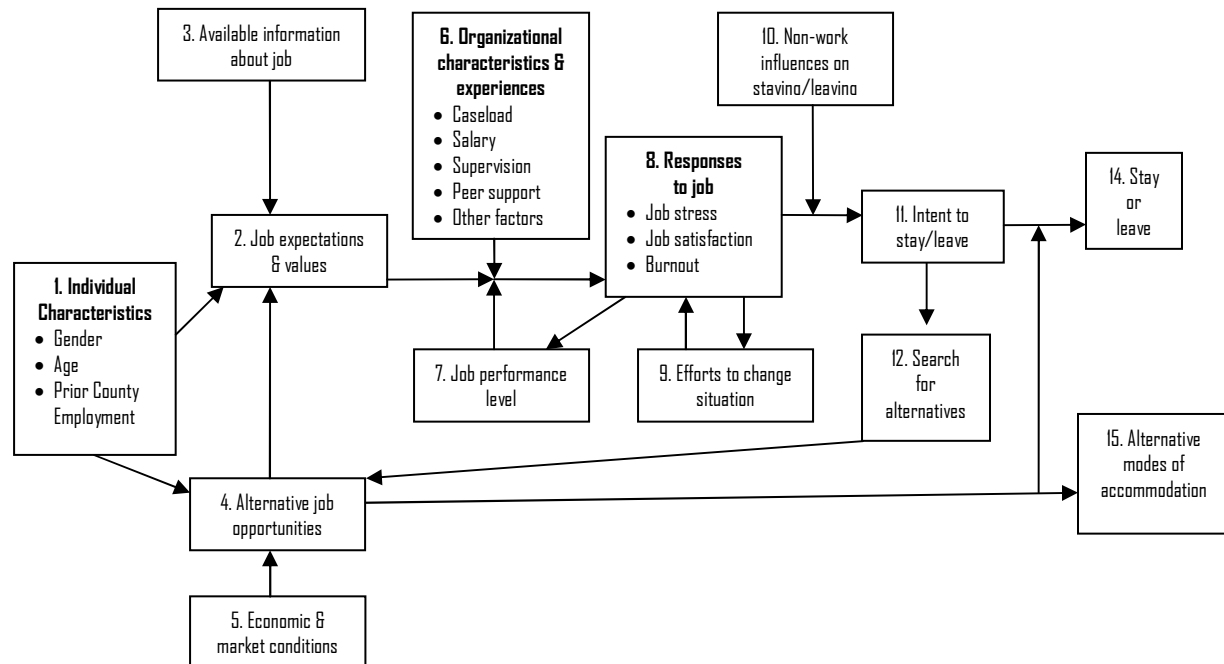
### **Summary**

This chapter has presented an integrated model of turnover along with several relevant constructs and theories. The goal has been to identify the variety of elements and perspectives which may be applicable to the current study. The integrated model suggested by Mowday et al. (1982) is comprehensive and attempts to address all relevant variables for turnover. However, it is unknown whether this model represents the variables that most strongly predict the retention and turnover behavior of child welfare workers. A review of child welfare research, followed by an analysis of key questions from the study's qualitative data, will further illuminate factors to consider when examining turnover and retention of child welfare workers.

## CHAPTER 3. CHILD WELFARE LITERATURE REVIEW

Factors common in child welfare turnover research, which are also represented in the integrated model are *individual characteristics*, *organizational characteristics & experiences*, and *responses to job*. The current literature examines several variables within each element. These variables are identified in Figure 3.1 and discussed below. The child welfare research findings discussed are limited to those studies which had retention or turnover as the outcome variable.

Figure 3.1 Key Child Welfare Research Variables Within the Integrated Model



### Individual Characteristics

Child welfare turnover research often includes variables related to the individual worker. These factors match the turnover model element, *individual characteristics*. Research findings related to gender, age, and prior county employment will be described in this section.

### Gender

Several studies have found turnover differences based on gender. Curry, McCarragher, and Dellman-Jenkins (2005) measure longevity of employment at seven years and found that women stayed on the job longer. Women were less likely to leave in a number of studies (Rosenthal & Waters, 2006; Scannapieco & Connell-Carrick, 2007; Weaver, Chang, Clark, & Rhee, 2007). Other studies show no significant findings for gender (Fryer, Miyoshi, & Thomas, 1989; Glisson & James, 2002; Jacquet, Clark, Morazes, & Withers, 2008; Jones, 2002; O'Donnell & Kirkner, 2009; Yankeelov, Barbee, Sullivan, & Antle, 2009).



## **Tenure**

Tenure may be identified as length of service or years of experience. A few studies suggest that increased tenure is related to retention (Balfour & Neff, 1993; Curry et al., 2005; Fryer et al., 1989). Tenure is addressed in an earlier CalSWEC study through the variable, prior county employment. The target population for Title IV-E programs may be existing child welfare workers interested in furthering their education, social work students who have never worked in child welfare, or both. In this earlier CalSWEC study, prior county employment was significant for retention. In other words, those participants who had previously held a county job or held a county concurrently with obtaining their MSW, were more likely to remain on the job than participants with no previous county experience.

## **Age**

Age also may be a factor but specific findings are limited. Younger workers appear more likely to leave (Fryer et al., 1989; Jones, 2002). Yet, other studies reflect no significance for age (Glisson & James, 2002; Jacquet et al., 2008). Still, age may be indirectly addressed by tenure and experience variables: those with more experience may be older than those with less. Therefore, it is undetermined which is the influential variable.

## **Organizational Characteristics and Experiences**

Organizational characteristics & experiences in the literature are often referred to simply as job factors. Job factors are important to consider because they identify turnover reasons for which agencies may be able to intervene. A study by Powell and York (1992) which explored both personal and job reasons for turnover found that 50% of participants rated job factors as highly influential on turnover decision, whereas only 12% listed a personal reason and no job factor as reason for turnover. Similarly, Kermish and Kushin (1969) found that 54% of reasons for leaving were related to job factors. Job factors provide the basic structural elements of employment and include caseload, salary, supervision, and peer support

## **Caseload**

According to one national study, administrative staff perceptions are that high caseloads and demanding caseloads are key reasons for turnover among frontline workers (APHSA, 2005). Another study targeting supervisors indicated that a realistic caseload was important for retention, but a definition for “realistic” is not provided (Kleinpeter, Pasztor, & Telles-Rogers, 2003). Studies which involve asking currently employed staff about why other staff leave also reflect a perception that high caseloads lead to turnover (Ellett, Ellis, Westbrook, & Dews, 2007; US GAO, 2003). However, other studies which target both staff currently employed and staff who have left provide mixed results (Jacquet et al., 2008; Smith, 2005). Smith found that caseload size had a negative influence on retention; conversely, Curry et al. (2005) found that workers with higher caseloads stayed on the job longer. An important insight into the question of caseload are the findings from Weaver and colleagues (2007) who found that the amount of time to acquire a full caseload predicted retention. In other words, staff who were given a full

caseload immediately upon hiring were more likely to leave than workers who were allowed time to get trained and oriented to the job prior to having full caseload.

## **Salary**

When included, salary is another job factor with mixed outcomes. In an early study of child welfare turnover, only one respondent cited salary as the primary reason for leaving (Kermish & Kushin, 1969). Additionally, Smith (2005) found that salary was not significant for retention. However, Dickinson and Perry (2002), with an earlier analysis of a smaller CalSWEC sample, indicated significant difference for salary, with leavers having an annual salary that was on average almost \$3,000 less than stayers' reported salaries. Supervisors in one study indicated that salary was more important for retention than training (Kleinpeter et al., 2003). Balfour and Neff (1993) did not examine salary but looked at overtime and found that those who worked overtime were more likely to stay. Their analysis of this finding was that the increased income provided by overtime work was what influenced the outcome.

## **Supervision**

Numerous studies indicate that supervisor support influences retention of child welfare workers (Dickinson & Painter, 2009; Dickinson & Perry, 2002; Jacquet et al., 2008; O'Donnell & Kirkner, 2009; Scannapieco & Connell-Carrick, 2007; Smith, 2005; Yankeelov et al., 2009). Supervisors and administrative staff also report that supervision impacts retention (APHSA, 2005; Kleinpeter et al., 2003). Qualitative studies indicate that quality supervision is a reason for staying, and poor relationships with supervisors is a reason for leaving (Barbee, Antle, Sullivan, Huebner, Fox, & Hall, 2009; Kermish & Kushin, 1969; Rycraft, 1994; Samantrai, 1992). However, one study does not confirm the significance of supervision for retention (Rosenthal & Waters, 2006) and others have not included supervision as a variable (Balfour & Neff, 1993; Jones & Okamura, 2000).

## **Peer Support**

Peer or co-worker support also has inconclusive findings with some studies indicating it is an important factor in worker retention (Barbee et al., 2009; Scannapieco & Connell-Carrick, 2007). The role of peer support for reducing stress neared significance ( $p = .06$ ) in another study (Fryer et al., 1989). However, other studies suggest that peer support does not predict retention (Weaver et al., 2007; Yankeelov et al., 2009). Two different CalSWEC samples have resulted in different findings; an early study found peer support significant for retention (Dickinson & Perry, 2002), while a later study did not find significance (Jacquet et al., 2008).

## **Other Job Factors**

Additional job factors such as hours worked and time spent on paperwork or with clients may also influence retention but few studies have examined them. Retained workers in one qualitative study listed hours worked as a reason for turnover (Ellett et al., 2007). For Weaver et al. (2007), hours worked did not predict outcomes. Dickinson and Perry (2002) found no difference between stayers and leavers for hours worked, but did find that leavers reported more

stress due to working overtime. As stated previously, Balfour and Neff (1993) found that overtime predicted retention. With regard to time spent on various job duties, Dickinson and Perry (2002) found that time spent in “other” activities was predictive of retention but time spent with clients or paperwork was not.

Flexibility, though not consistently examined, may also be an important job condition. One study highlighted having flexible work hours as important for retention (Ellett et al., 2007). Flexibility also refers to mobility within an agency. Two studies which targeted only stayers indicated an ability to transfer for better job fit as a reason for retention (Rycraft, 1994; Westbrook, Ellis, & Ellett, 2006). In another study, a lack of flexibility in job assignments (requests for transfers were ignored/denied) distinguished M.S.W.s who left from those who stayed (Samantrai, 1992).

### **Response to Job Factors**

Another facet of the child welfare turnover research which has a direct parallel in the integrated turnover model is *response to job* factors. While it is important to examine the structural conditions of a job, job factors only give part of the picture. Examining worker responses to job factors further illuminates the processes leading to turnover and retention behaviors. Response to job variables that are in the research and also relevant to the current study are job stress, job satisfaction, and burnout.

### **Job Stress**

In general, job stress has been identified as an issue for social workers. However, considering the nature of child welfare work, surprisingly few studies have examined sources of job stress as a factor in retention and turnover. Jayaratne and Chess (1984) found child welfare to be one of most stressful practice areas within the field of social work. When surveyed along with family service and community mental health workers, child welfare workers describe significantly worse levels of stress as identified through role conflict, role ambiguity, and workload (Jayaratne & Chess, 1984). The few turnover/retention studies which do report on stress provide inconsistent findings. Two studies reflect no significance for stress (Jones & Okamura, 2000; Weaver et al., 2007). Conversely, a study by Robin and Hollister (2002) identified stress as a reason for leaving. Almost 50% of responders in another study described the job being too stressful as what made them leave (Gonzalez, Faller, Ortega, & Tropman, 2009). Additionally, working overtime as a source of stress was significant for turnover in one of the earlier CalSWEC studies (Dickinson & Perry, 2002).

Other studies identify worker experiences and perceptions of the job which may lead to job stress while not specifically identifying these factors as job stress. Kermish and Kushin (1969) reported that a primary reason for leaving was the inability to actually help children and families. Gonzalez et al. (2009) also indicates inability to serve clients as a reason for leaving but to a lesser extent with only 20% of participants referencing this concern. Cahalane and Sites (2008) found significant differences between stayers and leavers in reports of role conflict but did not link this finding to job stress. In a study of stayers only, several participants (actual frequency not given) described role conflict as a stressful aspect of the job but not a reason to

leave (Reagh, 1994). Job stress, its connection to turnover, and the specific sources of it, are all untapped areas for research in child welfare worker retention.

## **Job Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction, while much more frequently examined than job stress, is another factor with mixed results in the research. Weaver et al. (2007) found job satisfaction to be significantly correlated with intention to leave for public child welfare workers, but found no significant relationship between job satisfaction and actual turnover. Fryer and colleagues (1989) found no differences in level of job dissatisfaction for stayers and leavers. Yet other studies reflect that job satisfaction predicts retention (Cahalane & Sites, 2008; Jones & Okamura, 2000; O'Donnell & Kirkner, 2009). Dickinson and Perry (2002) reported significance for 9 of 22 items on the CalSWEC job satisfaction scale, with stayers indicating more satisfaction with issues such as "the authority to make professional decisions" and "opportunities for promotion." Alternatively, Smith (2005) did not find significance for satisfaction with promotional opportunities.

## **Burnout**

In social work turnover research, work-related stress is often linked with or explored through burnout constructs (Ellett, 2009; Mor Barak et al., 2001). However, it is important to note that stress and burnout are not synonymous. Burnout is the result of "prolonged and unrelieved stress" (Lait & Wallace, 2002, p. 464). Examination of burnout using the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) is frequently utilized in child welfare turnover studies (Dickinson & Perry, 2002; Drake & Yadama, 1996; Reagh, 1994; Samantrai, 1992). The MBI includes three subscales which measure emotional exhaustion, personal accomplishment, and depersonalization (Dickinson & Perry, 2002; Maslach & Jackson, 1981). The emotional exhaustion subscale reflects the degree to which workers feel they have no more energy for the job. The depersonalization subscale measures the development of cynical attitudes towards and detachment from clients. The personal accomplishment subscale consists of items addressing how workers evaluate themselves and their ability to help clients (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Two studies indicate that emotional exhaustion is the only subscale with significance for child welfare worker turnover (Dickinson & Perry, 2002; Drake & Yadama, 1996). Reagh's (1994) study of stayers scored high on the personal accomplishment scale but the study lacks a comparison group. In a longitudinal study of Title IV-E M.S.W.s, higher levels of burnout predicted turnover but specific subscale results were not reported (O'Donnell & Kirkner, 2009).

## **Taking Stock of Mixed Findings**

There are several flaws in the existing literature on child welfare worker turnover and retention. Most striking from the above review is the number of variables with inconclusive or conflicting findings, such as salary, caseload, and job satisfaction. Mixed findings may be attributed to a number of inconsistencies and gaps in the research.

## **Study Participants**

The research is inconsistent in whose *individual characteristics* are being considered. Including only currently employed workers in studies, while perhaps more convenient, weakens the findings. Similarly, studies which only include leavers will not provide a full picture. Additionally, asking supervisors or administrators what they think causes workers to leave may provide skewed findings (APHSA, 2005; Kleinpeter et al., 2003). If researchers want to get a more accurate picture for why workers leave, then those who have left need to be targeted along with stayers. The current study will examine survey and interview data from both stayers and leavers.

Another gap for studies specifically evaluating Title IV-E M.S.W.s is failing to identify whether participants had child welfare work experience prior to getting their M.S.W. Jacquet et al. (2008) is the only study to include this variable for their study participants and found it to be a significant factor for prediction. This finding, if supported in other studies, could influence how programs select their students. The proposed study will examine the influence of prior county employment on retention as well as its influence in mediating sources of job stress and job satisfaction.

## **Intrinsic Job Factors**

Variables explored within the *organizational characteristics & experiences* could be better addressed. While many acknowledge the uniqueness of social work organizations (Hasenfeld, 1983; Patti, 2002), and even the distinctiveness of child welfare settings (Jayaratne & Chess, 1984; Smith, 2005) the nature of the work, or intrinsic job factors, is rarely identified in turnover studies. Those studies which have examined intrinsic factors have been one-sided. Jayaratne and Chess (1984) found that child welfare work was more stressful than community mental health but did not address the potential rewarding aspects of child welfare work. In a qualitative study by Gonzalez and colleagues (2009), the nature of child welfare work is defined by threats of violence and witnessing severely maltreated children. Conversely, Smith (2005) examined intrinsic job value, defined as the ability to help or make a difference, without examining negative intrinsic aspects. The current study will attempt to distinguish both the positive and the negative aspects intrinsic to child welfare work.

## **Job Stress and Job Satisfaction**

The research is limited in examining *responses to job*. Studies may identify aspects of burnout and their relation to retention, but not what job characteristics lead to the burnout. Thus, an identified area for further research is job stressors. Similarly, the absence of studies which explore specific sources of satisfaction demonstrates a gap in the literature. The current study may add to the field's understanding of both job stress and job satisfaction, and how specific sources influence retention and turnover.

## Outcome Definitions

Many studies do not actually examine the model outcome, *stay or leave*, but use intentions as the outcome. Several researchers have employed intent to stay as a proxy for actual retention (Potter, Comstock, Brittain, & Hanna, 2009; Landsman, 2001). While some research indicates that intent to leave is the strongest predictor of turnover (Nissly, Mor Barak, & Levin, 2005), others have questioned the usefulness of utilizing intentions as a proxy for action (Weaver et al., 2007). Workers can intend to quit their jobs without ever doing so. It is not clear whether improvements to their situation changed subjects' intentions or whether they are remaining while unhappy or dissatisfied. Smith (2005) found only a moderate association between intent and actual turnover. In another study examining both intent to leave and actual turnover, variables that were significant for intent were not significant for turnover (Weaver et al., 2007). Therefore, research which focuses on intent may not be identifying the issues that really predict behavior. This study will focus on what factors are related to actual turnover or retention.

Another problem with outcome definitions is how retention is defined. One study may consider retention as staying in child welfare regardless of whether workers remain in public agencies or are employed in private, non-profit agencies. So when a percentage is reported for stayers, it is not clear whether this group stayed in public child welfare agencies or in the field of child welfare overall. Others define retention specifically as remaining in public, county or state run child welfare agencies. This is an important distinction as the goal of Title IV-E programs is to improve the retention of specially trained M.S.W.s in public child welfare. This study will define retention as those workers who remain in public child welfare agencies.

## Outcome Timeframes

The assessment of *stay or leave* is inconsistent due to the range of timeframes used for defining retention both in Title IV-E and child welfare studies in general. If study participants are still in their Title IV-E work obligation then the resulting findings for stayers seem less significant. For example, Jones and Okamura (2000) report a retention rate of 89%; however, 50% of their participants were still under contractual obligation. Many people will feel bound by a contractual obligation and thus it is better to explore reasons for staying after the obligation period is completed. In other studies, assessing retention after only three or six months may also give inconclusive answers about what predicts retention. In the proposed study, participants are surveyed six months to a year after they finish their contractual obligation, so that the minimum time in agency at point of survey will be 2.5 years.

## Summary

The current child welfare literature addresses three key elements in the integrated turnover model, *individual characteristics*, *organizational characteristics & experiences*, and *responses to job*, and examines how these elements influence the model's outcome: *stay or leave*. However, many studies do not include all the elements identified in the model as influencing retention or turnover. Additionally, for the elements the research does address, it is rampant with inconsistent or conflicting findings. The two variables with the most consistent results are supervision and burnout. Still, there are gaps or discrepancies even for these indicators.

The purpose of the current study is to 1) build a conceptual model that helps to explain turnover and retention specifically in the field of public child welfare and 2) test the model's ability to identify variables which predict retention. It is expected that this study will replicate and support some of the current findings in the literature, while further illuminating other areas. For example, this study will examine specific areas of job stress and job satisfaction in which agency administrators can focus change efforts in order to improve retention. This study contributes to the literature by using the lens of an integrated, comprehensive model in order to clarify what is important for the retention of public child welfare workers.

## CHAPTER 4. INITIAL QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

This chapter reports on qualitative analysis conducted on select questions from CalSWEC's interview instrument. This initial analysis was performed as part of the theory building process, in order to further identify the utility of the integrated turnover model (Mowday et al., 1982), as well as related constructs and theories, for analyzing child welfare worker turnover and retention. Qualitative methods allow for the collection of rich data, offering context and depth that is not attainable with a quantitative survey. The use of qualitative methods allows the participants themselves to identify what is important (Padgett, 2008). Interviews with stayers and leavers provide an insider perspective to working in public child welfare (Morazes, Benton, Clark, & Jacquet, 2010). Furthermore, qualitative methods may illuminate important areas not identified by quantitative methods or for which quantitative results have been inconclusive (Padgett, 2008). Analysis of qualitative data provides opportunities to identify and build new measures and theory (Anastas, 2004; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). For the purposes of the current study, select interview questions are examined in order to better understand how the experiences of stayers and leavers differ and to provide direction for the conceptual model to be used in the quantitative analysis.

### Qualitative Methodology

At the conclusion of the CalSWEC quantitative survey, participants are invited to participate in the second phase of the study, a follow-up phone interview. Participants sign and return a letter of consent, along with their survey, if they are interested in participating in an individual interview. Participation in the interview is voluntary and participants can pass on any question or end the interview at any time. A copy of the complete interview instrument is attached in Appendix A. The phone interviews were recorded with participant's permission, and have been transcribed by graduate student researchers trained by CalSWEC research staff. Initial uploading and coding of all 465 interviews into NVivo 7 was completed by a cadre of CalSWEC graduate student researchers.

The interview instrument consists of 18 open-ended questions which explore the participants' thoughts, feelings and experiences about being in the Title IV-E MSW program and about working in public child welfare. The questions most relevant for examining factors which lead to turnover or retention (*stay or leave* in the integrated model) are "why do you stay?", asked of the stayers, and "why did you leave?", asked of the leavers. Answers to these questions also provide clarification regarding the model elements, *organizational characteristics & experiences* and *response to job*. An additional question, "did your education prepare you for your job in public child welfare?" was analyzed for further understanding of participants' *job expectations* and *responses to the job*. Comparing stayer and leaver responses to this question may further our understanding of how or where their work paths diverge.

Thematic frameworks were created per interview question to identify organizing themes and subthemes (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Ritchie, Spencer, & O'Connor, 2003). For the purposes of this study, the author has re-read, performed new thematic coding, and analyzed results for the three questions identified as primarily important for understanding retention and turnover.



Themes are created from responses specific to each question and not pre-determined. Therefore, themes and subthemes may not be consistent across questions.

## **Findings from Qualitative Analysis**

### **Why Stay?**

The first question assessed was question 15, “Why do you stay?” Participant answers can be sorted into four primary categories: 1) financial reasons, 2) job reasons, 3) combination financial and job reasons, and 4) other. The other category was created for responses which could not be defined as either financial or job reasons for staying. “Other” responses represented 8% (30) of total participant responses. Only 5% (19) of participants gave strictly financial reasons for staying. Roughly 23% (85) of participants talked about both financial and job reasons for staying. The majority of participants (222 or 61%) provided job reasons alone.

Job reasons can be further categorized as extrinsic or intrinsic. Extrinsic job reasons relate to factors that are agency or setting specific and thus that the agency may have more control over (e.g., supervision, opportunities for transfer). Intrinsic job reasons identify elements that are related to the nature of the job, potentially highlighting the benefits of working in public child welfare (e.g., the work is rewarding, job fits with worker values). For the stayers, intrinsic and extrinsic job factors were positive. However, both types of job factors can also be negative, as will be seen in the analysis of “why did you leave?”

There were far more intrinsic job factors described with 142 (39%) stayers describing only intrinsic, 24 (7%) stayers citing extrinsic factors only, and 56 (15%) stayers reporting both intrinsic and extrinsic factors as reasons for staying. Key themes with frequencies for job-intrinsic reasons, job-extrinsic reasons, financial reasons, and other are provided in Table 1 below. Themes are listed in order of greatest frequency.

Table 4.1 Themes and Frequencies for Question 15 Why Do You Stay?

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Frequency(% of total ) *</i>
<b>Job-intrinsic</b>	<b>264 (72.3%)</b>
▪ Enjoy job	128 (35.1%)
▪ Commitment to field or population	90 (24.7%)
▪ Work is rewarding	89 (24.4%)
▪ Worker feels competent	37 (10.1%)
▪ Opportunities to learn	31 (8.5%)
▪ Job fits worker values, personality	25 (6.8%)
▪ Job is challenging, not boring	23 (6.3%)
▪ Client success	16 (4.4%)
▪ Job is interesting	6 (1.6%)
<b>Job- extrinsic</b>	<b>135 (37%)</b>
▪ Opportunity for lateral transfer	48 (13.2%)
▪ Flexibility	26 (7.1%)
▪ Supervisor	26 (7.1%)
▪ Job conditions, environment	25 (6.8%)
▪ Co-workers	21 (5.8%)
▪ Management	15 (4.1%)
▪ Opportunity for advancement	15 (4.1%)
▪ People I work with	12 (3.3%)
▪ Opportunity to get LCSW	11 (3.0%)
▪ Worker feels valued and/or respected	3 (0.8%)
<b>Financial</b>	<b>104 (28.5%)</b>
▪ Salary & benefits	77 (21.1%)
▪ Stability/security	25 (6.8%)
▪ Retirement	17 (4.7%)
▪ Personal responsibilities	16 (4.4%)
<b>Other</b>	<b>30 (8.2%)</b>
▪ Worker is comfortable	17 (4.7%)
▪ Worker plans to/is leaving	13 (3.6%)

*\*Numbers will not equal sample sizes as many participants gave more than one theme in their answer and/or gave several examples within one theme.*

**Job-intrinsic.** Over a third of stayers reported that they loved or enjoyed their job. One person merely stated, “This is my career.” After global statements of job satisfaction, the next most common intrinsic aspect described was a commitment to the field of child welfare or to a specific population; this included children, families or a particular ethnic group. The third most

common intrinsic factor was that the work is rewarding. Stayers frequently indicated that they stay because they feel they are making a difference or having an impact. For some participants this included influencing change in the agency or system, while others described specific client success stories as motivating them to stay. Additionally, stayers reported feeling competent in their work, that the job fit their personality or values, and that the work was challenging or interesting.

Several participants acknowledged that there were bad days on the job and that they had to consciously remind themselves of the successes, of the good work being accomplished. Thus, while some participants gave strictly positive responses, others expressed a mix of positive and negative. For these participants, positive intrinsic job factors worked to ameliorate negative experiences.

“There are times when the job is really hard, there are times when I put in a lot of overtime and often unpaid or unclaimed overtime but there are also benefits to the job. Its great to see when families reunify, its great to be present when a child is adopted by a family and they've got a whole new life ahead of them, they've got new potential for where they are going so I guess everything balances out” (Stayer-BE1052).

**Job-extrinsic.** Striking are the number of participants who highlighted the ability to move around; not necessarily for advancement, but the ability to make lateral transfers. Several stayers stated that they would have left child welfare if they had not been able to switch departments. Frequently, the switch was to reduce stress experienced on the job; and switching to adoptions was the change most often referenced. Participants also indicated that moving into child welfare positions that required no interaction with the courts or involuntary clients, or that offered lower caseloads, reduced their stress and led to their decisions to stay. Yet, reducing stress was not the only reason given. Others described the mobility as a means for achieving a better fit for their skills or for avoiding boredom.

“What I like about county welfare is that I can work in dependency investigations as long as I want. I can transfer to Intake or Adoptions or a half a dozen areas. If I get bored, there is always some other place I can go within the county and continue to get benefits. I can even transfer to the CalWORKS program although I have heard it is boring. There is a special AIDS unit I'm interested in. The county is willing to keep their employees happy and productive through letting them transfer to other areas” (Stayer-SB410).

Flexibility and direct supervisors tied for the second most common extrinsic job factor. Examples of flexibility included four day work weeks and being able to schedule work hours around their own children's needs. Stayers listed multiple factors but emphasized the importance of a good supervisor.

“I stay because I feel like I have the connections with the youth that I'm working with... And I think also I do appreciate my supervisor, I think that if she were to go to another position I would seriously contemplate whether or not I wanted to stay” (Stayer-BE1133).

Stayers also mentioned the work environment, co-workers, and management as influencing decisions to stay. These participants like their agency's administration and feel they

are part of a team. Finally, some stayers appreciated the opportunities for advancement and licensure.

While a small number of stayers (7%) listed only extrinsic job factors, several stayers (15%) identified both extrinsic and intrinsic aspects of the job. These participants valued positive intrinsic experiences but also recognized how extrinsic factors play an important role in their decisions to stay.

“I stay because it is so moving to see somebody to make that shift in their lives... and say goodbye to families leaving the system and really never seeing them come back is such a powerful thing. And it’s a really amazing thing to be part of that. [However,] To me the biggest thing the biggest impact in quality of work life is who you’re supervised by and second is very important is what the value of the agency is. If the agency conveys a commitment to families I think most social workers who got into social work because they want to do social work I think most social workers are going to be happy. And if they have a supervisor who’s positive and supportive and can move with them with the struggles with cases” (Stayer-LA1009).

For these stayers, positive extrinsic job factors support opportunities to experience positive intrinsic job factors.

**Financial.** The financially-related reasons given are straightforward. Salary and benefits were the most common financial response. Many stayers indicated that they were not likely to find another job that paid as well or had a similar benefits package. Some participants stated that they were staying in order to gain their retirement. Other stayers talked about the security or stability that the job gave them. Additionally, participants indicated that the salary provided allowed them to manage personal responsibilities such as paying back student loans or paying their mortgage.

It is important to note that only a small number of stayers cited financial reasons alone. The majority of participants who mentioned financial reasons also described job factors that motivated them to stay.

“Well I think the reasons, I told you I really enjoy this job, I enjoy the people I work with immensely, I love my schedule, the pay is pretty good, the work is rewarding. Um, I just believe in our purpose here, and I feel I'm an integral part of that and with that, brings a lot of satisfaction” (Stayer-SD1065).

**Other.** Several responses did not fit in any of the three primary categories. The other category can be broken into two subthemes: plans to leave and job is comfortable. Approximately 4% of participants (13) indicated that they were leaving, actively looking for another job, or unsure whether they would stay. Reasons for wanting to leave included both extrinsic and intrinsic job factors. Some participants describe a lack of supervision and bureaucracy (negative extrinsic factors), while others reflect on stress due to the nature of the job or specific client situations (negative intrinsic factors).

“I may not. With this last situation, I love kids but I have a two year old and he come[s] first. And having a client saying she may try to abduct my son, I may not stay. I have to take her treats[sic] very seriously and she's threatened to abduct my nephew too. My agency is the one that is afraid she will do it.

It's not just me saying it. She has tried to kill her husband with cyanide in the past. She had done everything she has said she was going to do. And not feeling that safety net, I don't know if I'll stay. I'm actually considering getting out of child welfare” (Stayer-SJ1119).

Another 17 participants spoke of staying because they were comfortable in their job, but failed to describe specific aspects of the job for which they stayed. Being comfortable or afraid of change appears to be more related to the worker’s personality than to any aspect of the particular job.

“I mean there's a part of it that, is it's just practical for me. It's convenient, I've been doing it for a while, I feel like I know it, it's easier as opposed to starting over and doing something different” (Stayer-SF710).

### **Why Leave?**

The next question for analysis was question 16, “What led you to leave your job?” Only two participants indicated that they had not voluntarily left but had failed probation or been fired. For the remaining 98 leavers, answers could be placed into three primary categories: 1) personal reasons, 2) job reasons, and 3) a combination of personal and job reasons. Forty-one leavers (42%) cited job reasons only, 28 (29%) responded with only personal reasons, and 29 (30%) leavers gave both job and personal reasons for leaving.

Key themes for personal and job reasons are provided in Table 4.2, presented in order of greatest frequency.

Table 4.2 Themes and Frequencies for Question 16. What Led You to Leave Your Job?

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Frequency(% of total sample)</i>
<b>Personal</b>	<b>57 (58.2%)</b>
▪ Family issues	27 (27.6%)
▪ Other opportunities	18 (18.4%)
▪ More education	12 (12.2%)
▪ Follow career plan	5 (5.1%)
<b>Job</b>	<b>70 (71.4%)</b>
▪ Lack of support	29 (29.6%)
▪ Management, the system	22 (22.4%)
▪ Stress and burnout	19 (19.4%)
▪ Caseload/workload	13 (13.3%)
▪ Unable to do social work	10 (10.2%)
▪ Unable to transfer	8 (8.2%)
▪ Supervisor	7 (7.1%)
▪ Hours	5 (5.1%)
▪ Lack of flexibility	5 (5.1%)
▪ Salary	5 (5.1%)
▪ Lack of ethics (agency)	2 (2.0%)

*\*Numbers will not equal sample sizes as many participants gave more than one theme in their answer and/or gave several examples within one theme*

**Personal.** Family issues such as having to take care of a sick parent or a spouse being relocated were the most common personal reasons cited. Participants citing family issues or personal health problems often stated that they would not have left if not for the need to manage these issues.

“Well, it was a family, it was a personal thing. I had to move back to this area for personal reasons. It wasn't my job. I didn't want to [leave] my job. In fact, they wanted me to stay. I didn't want to leave” (Leaver-ST746).

Other leavers indicated personal reasons that made the decision to leave easier such as other opportunities. These opportunities included being recruited by other agencies and chances to travel. A few leavers indicated a desire to further their education or that they were following their career plan; that it had never been their intention to remain in public child welfare.

**Job factors.** There is a noticeable lack of intrinsic job factors in the answers to why did participants leave. The majority of reasons noted can be categorized as extrinsic job factors. A lack of support was the most common job reason given for leaving. This subtheme includes references to not being respected, not being able to work toward licensure, as well as failed attempts to change policies or the system. Participants also identified frustration with the management or the perceived bureaucracy of the system as reasons for leaving. Another

frequently cited subtheme was stress and burnout. Leavers often connected their feelings of stress to other job factors.

“It was too much. I worked a lot of hours and was emotionally drained. I wanted to take a break and then come back. The agency didn't have a mechanism for that. The only way was to go out on medical or psychiatric leave” (Leaver-BE363).

Additionally, conflict or negative experiences with their direct supervisor inspired several participants to leave. Basic structural issues were also noted, including caseload, workload, hours worked, and a lack of flexibility.

A troubling reason noted by 10% of leavers was the inability to “do social work”; often due to high caseloads and paperwork requirements. Participants described that they did not have enough time for effective client engagement. The perceived inability to practice social work was often linked with concern over the ethical provision of services.

“Again the amount of work. I didn’t feel that I was, I didn’t feel that I had the necessary time to devote to each family. You could only go make sure these people are still alive and go on to the next referral. There wasn’t really much time to engage and intervene with families. (couldn’t hear) So I felt that I was more of a disservice” (Leaver-BA1304).

Another notable job reason cited is management’s refusal to transfer workers, which is regrettable. Rather than seeing the value of keeping a specially educated employee in public child welfare in California, management is centered on what happens in their specific office. Furthermore, the issue of management ignoring where workers say they want to be placed is concerning.

“I had asked for several opportunities to move either laterally or up, but there was this glass ceiling. There was no way I could move in any direction. And with two Master's, being able to speak Spanish, I felt like there was a problem somewhere” (Leaver-SC1111).

## **Job Expectations**

Question 14, “Did your education prepare you for your job in public child welfare?” was analyzed as a proxy for *job expectations* in the integrated model. In addition, the question was selected for its ability to further illuminate workers’ experiences of extrinsic and intrinsic job factors (*organizational characteristics & experiences*) and to note any differences between stayers and leavers. However, coding and analysis of this question was complex and mired by format and transcription issues. The question includes two prompts or follow-up questions, asked of all participants: 1) “In terms of clients, problems, the nature of the work, etc., what were you best prepared for?” and 2) “What were you not prepared for?” Therefore, all participants are asked to identify what they were not prepared for, even if they had answered “yes I was prepared” to the base question. Similarly, those who answered the base question no, were still asked to identify what they were best prepared for. Given these issues, 100% yes or no responses were relatively rare. When asked the best and not prompts, almost everyone was able to provide responses; though there were some participants who would report there was nothing

they were not prepared for (a 100% yes) or there was nothing they were best prepared for (a 100% no). See Table 4.3 below for breakdown of responses by leavers and stayers.

Table 4.3 Frequency of Responses to Question 14. Did Your Education Prepare You for Your Job in Public Child Welfare?

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Mixed response</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Leavers</b>	8 (8%)	9 (9%)	83 (83%)	100
<b>Stayers*</b>	26 (7%)	19 (5%)	311 (85%)	356

*\* There were 9 (3%) non-responders in Stayer sample*

Table 4.3 indicates no real difference in frequency of responses by leavers and stayers, with over three fourths of both groups giving a mixed response. However, due to the inclusion of the prompts and the transcription problems, there is no way to know how many participants would have had a strictly yes or no response. Thus, it is impossible to truly gauge whether one group felt more prepared than the other.

Therefore, the aspect of the answers that is fruitful for analysis is in what ways or for which aspects did each group feel more and less prepared? After reading and listing stayer and leaver responses for both best and not prepared prompts, the author identified five themes or categories: 1) university specific (comments specifically about university experience or coursework), 2) worker technical skills (range from writing skills to social work specific skills like “starting where the client is”), 3) worker psychological aspects (thoughts, feelings, reactions to job), 4) job/agency aspects (such as bureaucracy or being on call), and 5) clients (specific problems or behaviors). Table 4.4 provides the total frequencies and top three responses for best prepared within each theme for both leavers and stayers.



Table 4.4 Best Prepared Themes (Frequencies) for Leavers and Stayers.

<u>Leavers</u>		<u>Stayers</u>	
	<b><i>University Specific</i></b>		<b><i>University Specific</i></b>
1.	Internship/field (15)	1.	Internship/field (115)
2.	Theoretical (4)	2.	Good foundation (14)
3.	Generalist practice (2)	3.	Coursework (6)
	Good foundation (2)		Child & life development classes (6)
			Child abuse & neglect classes (6)
	<b><i>Worker Technical Skills</i></b>		<b><i>Worker Technical Skills</i></b>
1.	Assessment/risk assessment (49)	1.	Working with clients (232)
2.	Working with clients (6)	2.	Cultural diversity/competence (23)
3.	Cultural diversity/competence (4)	3.	Assessment/risk assessment skills (19)
	<b><i>Worker Psychological Aspects</i></b>		<b><i>Worker Psychological Aspects</i></b>
1.	n/a ♦ (3)		Reality, intensity & nature of job (37)
2.	n/a		Ability to be compassionate (8)
3.	n/a		Raised consciousness, know own issues (7)
	<b><i>Job/agency Aspects</i></b>		<b><i>Job/agency Aspects</i></b>
1.	Court (12)	1.	Court (20)
2.	n/a (8)	2.	Bureaucracy (14)
3.	n/a	3.	Complexity of the system (3)
	<b><i>Clients</i></b>		<b><i>Clients</i></b>
1.	n/a (2)	1.	Family issues/systems/dynamics (49)
2.	n/a	2.	Substance abuse (17)
3.	n/a	3.	Mental health issues (16)
			Mental health issues (9)

♦ If there was only one participant giving an answer it was not included in ranking.

There are many similarities between leaver and stayer responses. Both stayers and leavers indicate the internship or fieldwork as the component of their Title IV-E MSW programs that best prepared them for working in public child welfare. For the worker technical theme, both stayers and leavers mention assessment/risk assessment skills, their abilities to work with clients such as building rapport, and cultural diversity/cultural competence. Similarly, both groups report working with the courts as the job aspect they felt most prepared for. However, a stark

contrast is offered in two theme areas. Leavers had no common responses in either the worker psychological or clients themes. For the worker psychological theme, there were only three leaver responses in total (each being cited by one person): being realistic, being flexible, and coping with stress. For the clients theme, there were only two leaver responses in total: substance abuse and child death. Therefore, across themes, stayers were better able to identify areas and issues they were prepared for while leavers were more limited.

Table 4.5 provides the total frequencies and top three responses for what participants were not prepared for, within each theme for both leavers and stayers.

Table 4.5 Not Prepared Themes (Frequencies) for Leavers and Stayers

<b><u>Leavers</u></b>		<b><u>Stayers</u></b>	
	<b><i>University Specific</i></b>		<b><i>University Specific</i></b>
1.	Theory/research vs. practice (7)		Theory/research vs. practice (21)
	Courses lacked depth (2)		
2.	n/a		Internship/field was bad (3)
			Child welfare class (3)
3.	n/a		Child development (2)
			School focus was too clinical (2)
	<b><i>Worker Technical Skills</i></b>		<b><i>Worker Technical Skills</i></b>
	(12)		(69)
1.	Time management/ prioritizing skills (4)		Time management/ prioritizing skills(12)
2.	Clinical skills (3)		Clinical skills (10)
			Understanding policies/laws/codes (10)
3.	Engaging clients, getting client buy in (2)		Case management/case planning skills (9)
	<b><i>Worker Psychological Aspects</i></b>		<b><i>Worker Psychological Aspects</i></b>
	(26)		(53)
1.	Stress (11)		Stress (23)
2.	Reality, intensity & nature of job (6)		Reality, intensity & nature of job (17)
3.	Dealing with children's emotional pain (3)		Own reaction to loss (2)
			Power of role, feeling responsible (2)
	<b><i>Job/agency Aspects</i></b>		<b><i>Job/agency Aspects</i></b>
	(54)		(168)
1.	Court (16)		Court (29)
2.	Bureaucracy (8)		Caseload/workload (24)
3.	Caseload/workload (4)		Paperwork (22)
	<b><i>Clients</i></b>		<b><i>Clients</i></b>
	(13)		(52)
1.	Substance abuse (6)		Substance abuse (19)
2.	Child death (2)		Mental health issues (7)
			Sexual abuse (7)
3.	n/a		Severity of abuse, extreme cases (6)

It is interesting to note that stayers and leavers again had very similar top responses, this time across all the themes. Stayers as well as leavers were able to identify areas for which they did not feel prepared. Both groups indicated that their education focused too much on theory or research skills and not enough on practice skills. Stayers and leavers share the most common responses for worker psychological as well. Many participants did not feel prepared for the stress or the nature of the job. Thus, while many stayers reported on positive intrinsic job factors when asked why they stay, they also experience the more negative intrinsic job factors. Under the job/agency theme, court was the number one response for both leavers and stayers. Ironically, for both stayers and leavers, court was also the agency/job aspect both best prepared for by some and not prepared for by others. For stayers only, the sub themes of clients both for best and not prepared are a close match; both including substance abuse and mental health.

### **Assessment of Qualitative Findings**

To a certain degree, the questions “why do you stay” and “what led you to leave your job” represent two sides of the same coin. Stayers reported flexibility and support while leavers reported a lack of flexibility and no support. Similarly, stayers often described their work as rewarding, that they were able to make a difference, while leavers voiced concern that they did not have enough time to engage clients, thus perhaps missing out on experiencing client success. Moreover, several stayers mentioned being able to change departments leading to a better fit, less stress, and a decision to stay in child welfare. The inability to transfer described by leavers is in direct contrast to the experience of stayers.

However, the two qualitative questions do not entirely allow for an exact comparison. Due to the nature of the questions, the two groups of participants often focused on different issues. For example, when asked why they left, leavers more often focused on negative job factors, primarily extrinsic, and did not describe the presence or absence of positive intrinsic job factors. While the inability to do social work theme may reflect an intrinsic factor, most leavers did not explicitly state that the work was not rewarding or that they were not committed to the field. Also the inability to do social work may say more about the agency setting than anything inherent in the job. Therefore, it is not easy to compare leavers’ negative extrinsic job factors with stayers’ positive intrinsic job factors.

Responses to “why do you stay” indicate that financial benefits are important for stayers but that job factors are the primary reasons for staying. Analysis of this question also highlights the presence of both intrinsic and extrinsic job factors, with stayers describing almost twice as many intrinsic job factors as extrinsic factors. Analysis of “what led you to leave your job” responses indicates that financial issues influence the decision for only a small number of leavers. Furthermore, the responses reflect that there are personal reasons for leaving which agencies have no control over. Frequently however, these reasons are preceded by negative job factors. For the leavers, there is an absence of intrinsic factors described. Yet, it is unclear whether this absence mirrors an absence in the job experience or is due to the nature of the question.

Finally, analysis of “Did your education prepare you for your job in public child welfare” indicates that stayers and leavers have similar expectations and reactions to the job. For example,

both groups report being prepared for working for clients but not prepared for high caseloads. Thus, our understanding from “Did your education prepare you for your job in public child welfare” is that stayers and leavers have similar job experiences; but then the questions regarding why stay or why leave begin to illuminate how the experiences of the two groups differ.

### **Connecting the Qualitative Findings to the Integrated Model and Related Research**

The analysis of select, open-ended questions from the CalSWEC interview instrument illuminates several factors which influence decisions regarding turnover and retention. This section will explore how the current findings support or contradict the integrated turnover model and related theoretical and empirical research.

### **Organizational Characteristics and Experiences**

One of the model elements most frequently described by both stayers and leavers was *organizational characteristics & experiences*. As previously noted leavers report job factors such as lack of support, the management, and workload most frequently as reasons for leaving. Stayers primarily report job factors such as rewarding work, flexibility, and supervisors as reasons for staying. The two questions (why do you stay, what lead you to leave your job) are open-ended. The participants are not influenced to respond with primarily job reasons rather than personal or financial reasons, these are the reasons that were most often reflected upon freely.

**Role ambiguity and role conflict.** One might expect that specialized training and internships in child welfare settings would reduce the risk of role ambiguity for these participants. A poorly defined job description could be attenuated by a realistic preview offered through field work, and not many participants describe role ambiguity. However in answering “Did your education prepare you for your job in public child welfare”, a few participants commented that in the internship they only had a caseload of 4-5 clients which did not prepare them for the reality of the job’s high caseload.

A stronger connection is made in the qualitative analysis for role conflict, and suggests a link between role conflict and stress which has not been strong in the research (Cooper et al., 2001). Several leavers described paperwork and caseload requirements which interfered with what they perceived as their ability to do social work. This scenario well reflects the concept of role conflict. The workers feel they need to connect with the clients but are unable, due to other job requirements. These findings support previous studies linking inability to help clients with turnover (Gonzalez et al., 2009; Kermish & Kushin, 1969).

**Caseload.** Assessment of the current child welfare research indicates mixed results in analyzing the importance of caseload. Combined with workload, caseload was the fourth most frequently cited job reason for leaving in the qualitative analysis; mentioned more frequently than supervisors or salary. However, when the question “Did your education prepare you for your job in public child welfare” is analyzed, both stayers and leavers complain about caseload/workload issues. Therefore, it is possible that something buffers the caseload/workload issue for stayers.

**Salary.** The minimal reference to salary by leavers (5%) supports the child welfare studies that indicate salary is not predictive of turnover. However, over 25% of stayers in the current qualitative analysis reported financial benefits as part of the reason they stayed. These findings may support the argument put forth by Ellett and colleagues (2007) that turnover and retention are distinct issues and result from different factors. In other words, salary may influence retention but not turnover. Another issue to consider is the possibility that a single salary variable used in previous quantitative studies may not allow for the comprehensive discussion of financial benefits provided in the current qualitative data, and hence not able to give a clear, conclusive answer.

**Supervision.** The supervisor is identified both as a reason for staying and as a reason for leaving. Yet the frequency for both stayers and leavers is surprisingly small (7% each). These findings do not replicate previous child welfare research which indicates that supervision predicts retention (Dickinson & Painter, 2009; Scannapieco & Connell-Carrick, 2007). In fact, the implication that supervision is more important than other organizational conditions, as indicated in social exchange and POS theories, is not supported in the current analysis.

However, almost 30% of leavers reported a lack of support as influencing their decision to leave. Leavers describe feelings of not being supported or valued despite the work they do. Participants were not asked to define the lack of support and so it may include supervision even though not specifically cited. Alternatively, stayers sometimes described negative job elements but were able to identify positive experiences that supported their staying. Thus they experienced reciprocity, positive experiences in return for continuing to work hard despite negative elements, which is identified in both theories.

While not identified, supervisors may play a role in the experience of many job factors identified by stayers, such as flexibility and job conditions. Thus, positive extrinsic job factors described by stayers may be related to the presence of supervisor support. It is not clear from the qualitative analysis how supervisors may support or hinder participants' access to positive intrinsic job factors, which stayers often described but leavers did not. Therefore, the qualitative analysis does not provide conclusive results regarding the significance of supervisor support and supervision.

**Peer support.** The mixed findings regarding the importance of peer support from stayers and leavers reflect the mixed findings in the child welfare research. While stayers listed co-workers as part of reason they stayed, others were vague. Several stayers cited "the people I work with" but did not clarify if they meant co-workers, supervisors, or clients. Still, these references are absent from leavers' reasons for leaving. When leavers described a lack of support it was not directly linked to peers. However, peers may be included in lack of support responses without being cited specifically. Thus the role of peer support remains unclear.

**Other job factors.** Job factors such as hours and paperwork may not be significant by themselves but rather may be important for how they represent overall job conditions. Hours as a job factor was mentioned infrequently by either leavers or stayers. For stayers, hours were linked to flexibility (e.g., able to fit work schedule around having children) while for leavers, they were linked to workload issues. Paperwork was also linked to workload for leavers, as it was not

mentioned often enough to be a separate theme. Many stayers referenced not being prepared for the amount of paperwork. Thus, paperwork is an identified negative extrinsic factor but not a primary reason for turnover.

Opportunities for advancement have been acknowledged as important for job satisfaction, retention and turnover (Cahalane & Sites, 2008; Landsman, 2001; Powell & York, 1992). Interestingly, none of the leavers in the current qualitative analysis mentioned a lack of advancement opportunities as a reason for turnover. What is important in the current qualitative analysis is the ability to move horizontally and opportunities for transfer in order to improve person-job fit. The ability to transfer was cited as important by both leavers and stayers. These findings concur with results from studies which examined mobility within the agency as a factor for retention (Rycraft, 1994; Samantrai, 1992; Westbrook et al., 2006).

**Met expectations.** Met expectations represents how *organizational characteristics & experiences* relate to *job expectations*. Since the CalSWEC interview instrument does not have a question directly asking about met expectations, the question, “Did your education prepare you for your job in public child welfare”, is used as a proxy. The qualitative analysis suggests that the construct, met expectations is more nuanced than has been considered in the research. There were a number of similarities across stayer and leaver responses. Both groups cite worker technical skills as items best prepared for and both report job/agency factors most frequently when asked what they were not prepared for. Thus, in many regards, stayers and leavers had similar expectations about job structure, environment and rewards, and met expectations does not appear to influence turnover decisions.

## **Responses to Job**

The other model element most often addressed in the qualitative findings is *responses to job*. In the interaction of organizational characteristics and experiences with responses to job, we find descriptions of situations that produce job satisfaction or job stress.

**Job satisfaction.** The term job satisfaction was not directly used by participants but can be inferred by stayer responses, such as “I love my job.” Additionally, many stayers, even stayers who acknowledged negative aspects, were able to identify job factors which led to their retention. One would conclude that stayers were satisfied with these elements of their jobs. Alternatively, leavers often described job factors, rather than personal reasons, which lead to their turnover, potentially illuminating job dissatisfaction. For both stayers and leavers there were several job factors identified which supports the need for a multi-item scale to illuminate specific sources of job satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

Furthermore, the current qualitative analysis strongly supports distinguishing intrinsic job factors from extrinsic as proposed by the motivation-hygiene theory. At first glance, the findings also appear to support the argument that motivation (intrinsic) factors influence job satisfaction and hygiene (extrinsic) factors influence job dissatisfaction. As previously noted, leavers most often reported only extrinsic job factors as reasons for leaving. However, some leavers acknowledged the inability to provide effective services to clients as part of their reason, which would reflect the absence of a motivation factor influencing job dissatisfaction. Moreover,

stayers articulated both intrinsic (motivation) and extrinsic (hygiene) reasons for staying, potentially reflecting that both types of job factors influence job satisfaction. Thus, the qualitative analysis supports previous research which questions the overall validity of considering job satisfaction and dissatisfaction to be separate constructs. Still, the stark contrast of stayer and leaver responses confirms the value of distinguishing intrinsic and extrinsic job factors.

**Job stress and burnout.** Stress and/or burnout were cited as influencing turnover by almost 20% of leavers. Additionally, leavers offered several issues that could be considered to lead to stress such as lack of support and respect, concerns about ethical provision of services, and feeling overwhelmed by paperwork and caseload. Alternatively, stayers often acknowledged negative job aspects but also described factors that likely acted as moderators such as supportive supervisors, positive team environments, and rewarding client outcomes. Both stayers and leavers indicated that they had not been prepared for the stress they experienced on the job. The qualitative findings support the need for further exploration of job stress and potential moderators.

The qualitative findings also support the suggestion made in POS theory that stressors that are perceived as controllable by the organization will reduce perceived support, satisfaction, and retention. As previously suggested, there are stressors in child welfare that are not controllable by the organization but rather are intrinsic to the job (e.g., seeing badly abused children). Leavers identified several extrinsic job factors as reasons for turnover but rarely identified any intrinsic job factors.

## **Other Model Elements**

*Alternative job opportunities* and *non-work influences* appear to have minimal impact. Some leavers described other job opportunities as a reason for leaving, and some stayers acknowledged that they could not get similar salary and benefits elsewhere, indicating a lack of alternative job options. However, in both cases the reference to job opportunities was infrequent, suggesting it may not be highly significant for retention in public child welfare. Additionally leavers often described other job offers as the final reason, after describing negative job factors. In regards to *non-work influences*, stayers were just as likely to describe familial responsibilities (e.g., paying mortgage, feeding children) as part of financial reasons for staying; as leavers were to describe familial responsibilities (e.g., spouse relocation, taking care of sick parent) as reasons for turnover.

Another model element occasionally identified by stayers and leavers was *efforts to change situation*. Efforts to change situation are reflected in specific reference by leavers to failed attempts at changing policy or the system, and in references by both stayers and leavers regarding transfers. Stayers experienced success in their efforts to change by getting transferred to other departments, while leavers described denied transfer requests which influenced their decisions to leave. Thus, the model's identification of efforts to change situation as important to understanding turnover is supported. However, similar to alternative job opportunities and non-work influences, it is not a factor frequently described.



## **Summary and Proposed Direction**

The qualitative analysis supports many model elements as well as several of the findings in the current child welfare research. However, the analysis also suggests areas that are not as meaningful as may be reflected in current research. For example, the significance of supervisors is not as clear in the qualitative findings as it has been in the empirical and theoretical research. Moreover, while many elements from the integrated turnover model are illuminated by the qualitative analysis, the importance of many elements appears small.

The qualitative analysis indicates that organizational characteristics and responses to job may be the most significant elements for turnover and retention in public child welfare. What is not necessarily illuminated by these model elements, but is quite apparent in the qualitative analysis, is the existence and influence of intrinsic versus extrinsic job factors within organizational characteristics. Significant for child welfare settings, but not consistently identified in the research, is the nature of the job. Previous research has identified that child welfare is a more stressful job setting than community mental health (Jayaratne & Chess, 1984) which begins to suggest the influence of the work itself. Other research begins to explore the nature of the job by identifying the intrinsic value of the job (Smith, 2005). However, in each case the concept presented is one-sided. What the current analysis illustrates is that the nature of the job is two-sided. It can include rewarding experiences such as successfully reunifying a family, but can also include negative, emotionally-draining experiences such as seeing severely abused children.

Still, it is suggested that while the nature of the job is a crucial element to consider for child welfare research, it alone is not the reason for turnover. The responses to “why do you stay” and “what led you to leave your job” reflect the complexity of public child welfare work and that there is no single reason for staying or leaving. The data from both stayers and leavers highlight many significant aspects that affect their decisions. The work can be both stressful and rewarding. Thus the process leading to turnover or retention is complicated. Perhaps the problem is that leavers experience the negatives in the nature of the job but do not (or rarely get to) experience the rewarding side of the nature of the job. Moreover, the qualitative analysis would suggest that extrinsic job factors interfere with leavers’ abilities to experience the rewards inherent in public child welfare. Therefore, a turnover model for public child welfare needs to be able to identify this double sided nature of the job and how extrinsic job aspects support or impede how the worker experiences the nature of the job.

## CHAPTER 5. PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL MODEL: FOCUS FOR QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

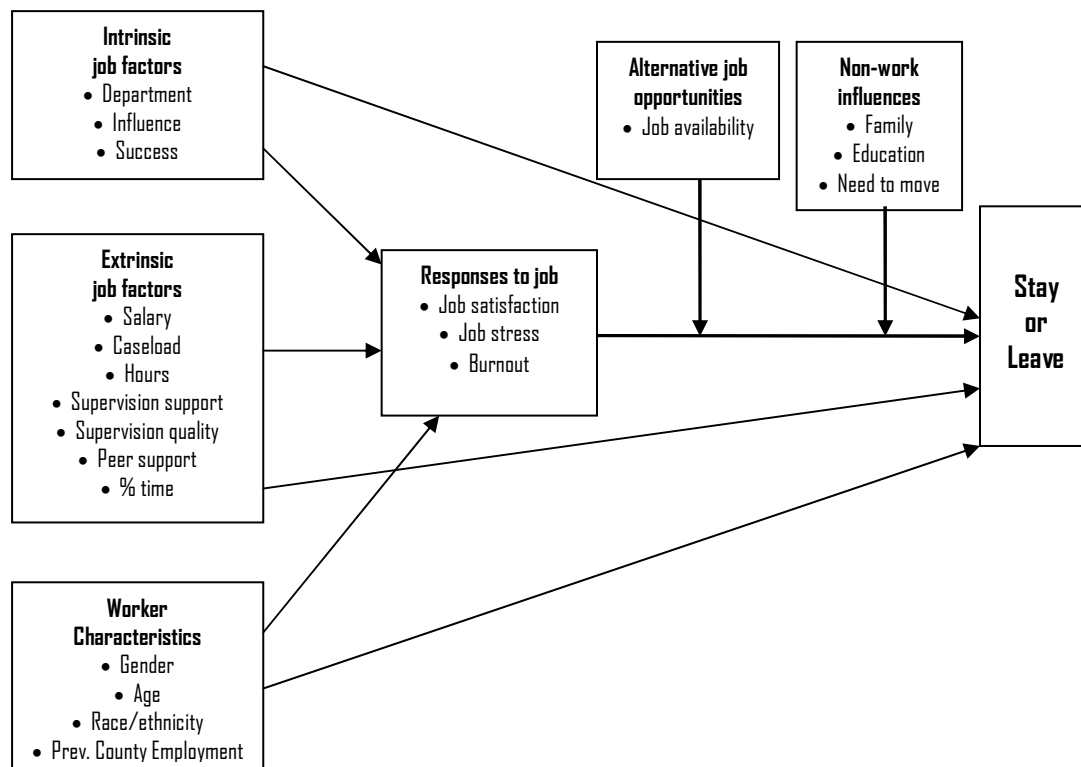
Several sources have been appraised for insight into what factors influence worker turnover and retention specifically in public child welfare. A comprehensive turnover model was introduced and a search of organizational theories and constructs was conducted in order to piece together elements that might be relevant for the child welfare workforce. Then, an examination of the child welfare research that specifically addressed worker turnover was offered. The third step entailed coding and analyzing select questions from CalSWEC's qualitative interview instrument in order to construct a conceptual model that fit the unique nature of child welfare. A driving question is how can we understand the diverging paths of stayers and leavers? The worker population being studied is homogeneous in terms of educational background and initial commitment to child welfare (Morazes et al., 2010); and yet two groups emerge with distinctly different outcomes. The three fields (theoretical, empirical, qualitative analysis) explored in earlier chapters establish key points of overlap for understanding child welfare turnover as well as some gaps. This chapter will present a conceptual model based on the compiled findings from the theoretical research, empirical child welfare research, and current qualitative analysis. This model will be used to analyze data from the CalSWEC quantitative survey.

### **A Proposed Turnover Model for Child Welfare**

A comprehensive, integrated turnover model may be useful for understanding child welfare workers, but the usefulness of existing models is relatively unknown due to their absence in most child welfare turnover research. At the same time, the applicability of general turnover models for child welfare settings may be questioned due to the uniqueness of the setting. Human service organizations (including child welfare) often share the bureaucratic characteristics of other organizations, such as having an established internal structure for control and coordination as well as being goal-driven but can still be considered distinct from other organizations (Hasenfeld, 1983). One such distinction is the role of clients as both consumers and raw material. Further, researchers indicate that child welfare settings specifically have unique characteristics which may influence retention (Jayaratne & Chess, 1984; Smith, 2005). Additionally, as understood from the qualitative analysis, the nature of child welfare work includes both emotionally rewarding and emotionally draining tasks, making this work distinct from organizations often studied in management research. Consequently, existing models and theories used to explain worker experiences of, and responses to, the job may not adequately address all the factors involved in child welfare work.

Still, the qualitative analysis supports the role of a multitude of sources which can influence turnover and retention decisions. Therefore, a model of turnover taken from the management field that is modified to address factors specifically relevant to child welfare turnover is recommended. Given the insights provided by the theoretical research, empirical research and qualitative analysis, the following integrated model is suggested (Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1 Proposed Turnover Model for Child Welfare



The model in Figure 5.1 is an adaptation of the integrated turnover model proposed by Mowday and colleagues. Similar to the Mowday et al. (1982) model, this turnover model for child welfare also addresses key arguments from the other relevant theories identified in chapter 2. It covers the importance of the exchange relationship and perceived support highlighted in social exchange and perceived organizational support theories, and acknowledges the role of job factors as identified by motivation-hygiene and organizational-professional conflict. The proposed model is different from the Mowday model in that it has been modified, both simplified and expanded, based on the findings from the child welfare research and the qualitative analysis.

### Element Removal

Modifications include the removal of several elements including *job expectations*, *available job information*, *intent to stay/leave*, and *alternative modes of accommodation*. The participants for the current study all received a specialized MSW education which included fieldwork in public child welfare agencies. Hence, this group will be fairly similar in regards to available job information and job expectations. The responses to the question, “Did your education prepare you?” support this assumption, indicating little or no difference between stayers and leavers.

The dependent variable in the current study is retention. Intent to stay/leave has been used in many studies but its use may be due more to convenience and available resources than to actual validity in explaining turnover behavior. Thus the proposed model does not include intent

to stay/leave. Similarly, because retention/turnover is the outcome of interest, job performance level and alternative modes of accommodation (e.g., absenteeism) are omitted from the proposed model.

### **Element Placement**

Another difference in the proposed model are the roles of *individual characteristics* (known as worker characteristics in proposed model) and *alternative job opportunities*. Individual characteristics in the Mowday et al. (1982) model appear to only influence job expectations. In this adapted model, worker characteristics directly influence responses to the job. This link will allow for the possibility that characteristics such as prior county employment or age may be related to job response, such as job stress, regardless of job factors. Following the feedback to the question “What lead you to leave?” in the qualitative analysis, alternative job opportunities is placed following responses to job rather than before. The process appears to be that participants experience the job, and then their response of job stress or job satisfaction is what influences their examination of alternative jobs.

### **Element Expansion**

Finally, the *organizational characteristics* element has been split into two distinct components: intrinsic job factors and extrinsic job factors. As described previously, due to the nature of child welfare work, job factors are more complex than currently addressed in the literature, and can be considered to consist of both intrinsic and extrinsic elements. In turn, both intrinsic and extrinsic job factors can be subdivided further, with both types of job factors including positive and negative attributes. It is suggested that the extrinsic job factors can influence the experience of intrinsic job factors, either as support or interference. For example, quality supervision can provide worker support to deal with client trauma (negative intrinsic); or caseload size can interfere with client engagement (positive intrinsic).

### **Summary**

This chapter has presented a model for turnover which may enhance the current knowledge base regarding child welfare turnover in three distinct ways. First, the current study identifies the complexity of job factors in child welfare settings, recognizing the importance of both extrinsic and intrinsic factors for the experience of child welfare work. Moreover, the study expands previous one-sided representations of intrinsic job factors, allowing for both the rewarding side and emotionally draining side of the work of child welfare to be included. Secondly, the study may expand our understandings of job satisfaction and job stress by using multi-item scales for each construct. Thus, the study may be able to identify specific sources of satisfaction and stress which influence the turnover/retention outcome, allowing agencies to better focus job improvement efforts. Finally, as noted in chapter 3, the child welfare turnover research is full of mixed findings. The current study, with a large sample that includes both stayers and leavers, will help to clarify factors for which findings have previously been inconclusive. The next chapter will address the methods employed in the quantitative analysis, including an operationalization of the key constructs and a description of the measures utilized. This will be followed by a chapter describing the findings from the quantitative analysis.

## CHAPTER 6. QUANTITATIVE METHODOLOGY

This study uses a cross-sectional survey design to assess retention in a large sample of specially trained child welfare workers. Participants are all child welfare workers who have participated in a CalSWEC Title IV-E MSW program, have completed their work obligation period, and at time of survey, have either chosen to remain in public child welfare (stayers) or leave (leavers). A primary goal of the study is to test the usefulness of a conceptual model for understanding turnover and retention of workers in public child welfare. An additional goal is to help inform the child welfare research on what factors predict retention.

### **The CalSWEC Dataset**

CalSWEC administers the Title IV-E stipend program contracts to all schools of social work in California. The ongoing retention study, which is the focus of the current study, is one of several evaluation projects conducted by CalSWEC with the goals of identifying, understanding, and disseminating best practices in social work education, training and practice with a focus on public child welfare. CalSWEC's retention study follows individuals who have graduated from a Title IV-E supported MSW program and who have completed their work obligation. The study population entered into a contractual agreement with CalSWEC when they agreed to participate in the Title IV-E program. The study seeks to understand what Title IV-E graduates do after they have completed their work obligation.

### **Study Population**

The study population consists of all CalSWEC Title IV-E graduates who completed their contractual work obligation during the years 1996-2008, N= 2,295.

### **Data Collection**

CalSWEC maintains a database, the CalSWEC Student Information System (C.S.I.S), with information provided by each graduate including initial work information and contact information such as current home address and email. Six months to one year after a new cohort has completed their work obligation, CalSWEC emails or mails a survey to each Title IV-E graduate. After completion of their work obligation, graduates can choose to stay or leave public child welfare without breaking their contractual agreement with CalSWEC. A cover letter which congratulates the participant on completion of their work obligation, explains the purpose of the survey, and addresses confidentiality is included with both the electronic and paper versions of the survey.

The 12-page survey consists of 33 questions and focuses on work conditions, work experiences and personal information. Participation in the survey is voluntary and confidential. A copy of the cover letter and mail survey are attached in Appendix B. Survey participants are free to fill out the survey either online or by hard copy at whatever location and whatever time they wish. Those who receive the hard copy are provided a stamped return envelope. A database separate from the C.S.I.S. database is used to maintain survey data. Upon receipt of a filled in survey, the participant is given a unique identification code and participant names are not kept

with survey data. All data are stored at the CalSWEC offices in locked file cabinets and on secured servers.

## **Human Subjects**

The larger ongoing retention study from which this study draws its data has been approved by UC Berkeley's Committee for Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS). Procedures are in place to inform participants of the purpose of the retention study, as well as provide clear communication and assurances regarding the voluntary and confidential nature of the study. All individual responses to surveys and interviews are confidential and voluntary. Survey data is only released in aggregate form. Direct quotes from transcribed interviews may be used in reports and publications but only with additional permission. A request for use of quotes is included in the interview.

Due to the current study being a subset of the ongoing CalSWEC study and not requiring any new information from participants, it is included under the larger study's CPHS approval. CPHS determined that the author did not need to submit a separate protocol. A copy of the current CPHS approval document is provided in the appendices (Appendix C).

## **The Sample**

### **Sampling Plan and Response Rate**

This study uses a voluntary, self-selected sample. Data for this study have been collected from graduates of CalSWEC Title IV-E MSW programs within the state of California who have completed their work obligation period. During the period 1996-2008, 2,295 Title IV-E graduates completed their contractual obligation and were sent the self-administered surveys. The survey had a response rate of 49% (1,129 of 2,295). Surveys which contained a large number of missing responses were considered unusable and were eliminated from the sample (27). Thus the response rate for usable surveys (1,102) is 48%.

### **Representativeness**

Using the C.S.I.S. database, the sample in the current study was compared to the population of all CalSWEC Title IV-E graduates who had completed their contractual obligation during the years 1996-2008. Comparison allows for identification of potential systematic bias in the data. The sample and population were compared on the following variables: age, gender, race/ethnicity, and previous county employment. The sample is representative of the population for age, gender, and previous county employment. The study sample differs from the population in regards to race/ethnicity (Pearson chi-square = 41.502, 5 df,  $p = .000$ ). Specifically, fewer African Americans and Hispanics than expected participated in the survey, while more Caucasians and those identifying as Other/Mixed than expected participated in the survey.

The sample and population were also compared on the dependent variable, retention. Each year, follow up contact is made in order to locate those eligible for participation in the study who failed to return a survey. Among the total population ( $N = 2,295$ ), retention status at

the time of study recruitment has been determined for N=2,035. Among the population members for which retention status could be ascertained, 69% were stayers. This indicates that the stayers are overrepresented in the sample (85%).

## Sample Description

The participants in this study consist of 1,102 public child welfare workers who have participated in a Title IV-E MSW program in the state of California. There are 931 (84.5 %) women and 171 (15.5%) men, with an average age of 33.8 (SD = 8.7 years). The racial-ethnic identification of participants is as follows: 154 (14%) African American, 21 (1.9%) American Indian, 105 (9.5%) Asian American, 424 (38.5%) Caucasian, 287 (26.0%) Hispanic/Latino, and 111 (10.1%) Other/Mixed. The majority of the group (704 or 63.9%) had not been county employees prior to completing their Title IV-E MSW program. Most of the participants (940 or 85.3%) remain employed in public child welfare at the time they were surveyed. Table 6.1 summarizes the descriptive information.

Table 6.1 Sample Characteristics, n= 1,102

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Gender		
Male	171	15.5%
Female	931	84.5%
Race/Ethnicity		
African American	154	14.0%
American Indian	21	1.9%
Asian American	105	9.5%
Caucasian	424	38.5%
Hispanic/Latino	287	26.0%
Other/Mixed	111	10.1%
Previous County Employment		
Yes	398	36.1%
No	704	63.9%
Remain in Public Child Welfare		
Yes	940	85.3%
No	162	14.7%
Age	In years	
Mean	33.8	
Minimum	22.4	
Maximum	63.5	

## Measures

The survey consists of 33 questions addressing participants' work experiences, perceptions of their job, and personal information. Nineteen of the 35 questions have been identified as addressing elements from the conceptual model and are used in the current study. Additional variables were pulled from the C.S.I.S. database. Table 6.2 identifies the variables that are used to test the conceptual model.

Table 6.2 Concepts and Variables Included in the Study

<b>Model Elements</b>	<b>Worker Characteristics</b>	<b>Extrinsic Job Factors</b>	<b>Intrinsic Job Factors</b>	<b>Responses to Job</b>	<b>Stay or Leave</b>
<i>Variables (Survey item #)</i>	<i>Independent</i>	<i>Independent</i>	<i>Independent</i>	<i>Independent</i>	<i>Dependent</i>
	Previous county employment (C.S.I.S. data)	Annual salary (#7)	Worked in adoptions (#6)	Burnout (#25 1-22)	Currently employed in public child welfare (#1 & #3)
	Race/ethnicity (#32 A-G)	Hours worked per week (#8)	Level of influence to affect clients (#28A)	Job stress (#26 A-O)	
	Gender (#30)	% time spent on various job tasks (#9)	Level of success in helping clients (#28D)	Job satisfaction (#27 A-U)	
	Age (#29)	Caseload size-children (#10)			
	Cohort (C.S.I.S. data)	Supervisor support (#19 A, #20A, #21A)			
		Peer support (#19 C, #20C, #21C)			
		Quality supervision (#22A-F)			

## Dependent Variable

The dependent variable for this study is retention, measured as a dichotomous variable. Respondents are asked whether they are still employed, at time of survey participation, in the same agency in which they completed their work obligation. This question is then followed up by questions pertaining to current place of employment if no longer working in the county where they completed their work obligation. Participants are identified as stayers if they are still in the



same county or at another public child welfare agency (state or county), and as leavers if they are working anywhere else (e.g., non-profit organization, school setting, not working).

## **Independent Variables**

The independent variables for this study are the specific survey items which represent elements of the conceptual model. These elements include worker characteristics, job factors-extrinsic, job factors-intrinsic, and response to job factors.

**Worker characteristics.** Individual factors include previous county employment, gender, race/ethnicity, age, and cohort.

***Previous county employment.*** Status as a county employee prior to or during their Title IV-E MSW program is not identified in the survey; rather it is part of the participant information provided in the C.S.I.S. database. Once survey respondents are matched with their C.S.I.S. information, previous county employment status is pulled and entered into survey database.

***Gender.*** The survey includes a question “What is your sex?” with two answer options, female and male.

***Race/ethnicity.*** In the personal information section of the survey participants are provided with seven race/ethnicity options, for which they should check which one they identify as. The seven options are: a) African/African American/Black, b) American Indian, c) Asian American/Filipino/ Pacific Islander, d) Caucasian, e) Hispanic/Latino, f) Mixed, and g) Other. For participants who did not answer this question, information was pulled from the C.S.I.S. database. SPSS syntax was then used to collapse the Mixed and Other categories, providing six race/ethnicity categories for analysis.

***Age.*** Participants are asked to identify their month and year of birth. SPSS syntax is then used to calculate participants’ age at time of survey completion. Missing date of birth data was replaced with the same information from the C.S.I.S. database.

***Cohort.*** The data for the current study spans a 12-year period (1996-2008). The variable cohort was created as an additional worker characteristic in order to address the longitudinality of the data. The cohort variable reflects the year that participants completed the survey and is the closest representation available of when participants completed their contractual obligation. The survey database includes the year that CalSWEC received a participant’s survey. This variable formed the basis for the cohort data with two instances of collapsing years. No new surveys were mailed in 2000 and any surveys received in 2000 had actually been administered in 1999. Therefore, the years 1999 and 2000 were combined. Similarly any 2009 received surveys had been administered in 2008, and those two years were also combined.

**Job factors-extrinsic.** Extrinsic job factors assessed include salary, hours, caseload, percent of time spent on various job tasks, supervision, and peer support. These factors are extrinsic job factors because they are all elements which are attributable to and potentially controlled by the organization.

The annual salary, hours worked per week, and caseload size items require participants to fill in a concrete value (e.g., 50,000 for salary, 40 for hours worked per week). The caseload size item asks, “On average, per month, how large was/is your caseload?” There are blanks for both number of children and number of families. Only responses to number of children are used in the current study as it is the category that was most consistently answered.

**% Time spent on various job tasks.** Participants were asked to estimate the percentage of time during work week, totaling 100%, devoted to the following tasks: a) direct services for/with clients, b) supervision/consultation/training, c) management/planning/evaluation/research, d) community organization/advocacy/education, e) paperwork / computer work, and f) other.

**Supervisor support and peer support.** Participants were asked to rate various support systems with three questions, using a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1(not at all true) to 4(very true). The questions were: a) “How much can/did you rely on the following people when things get/got tough at work?”, b) “How willing are/ were the following people to listen to your work-related problems?”, and c) “How helpful are/were each of the following people to you in getting your job done?” The survey identifies five distinct support systems, this study will only examine two support systems: immediate supervisor and peers at work. The means of the items are used to compute each variable due to missing values. The reliability coefficients as measured by Cronbach’s alpha are .86 for supervisor support and .77 for peer support (Jacquet et al., 2008).

**Quality supervision.** The role of supervision was further examined with an additional six item scale. Based on a questionnaire by Shulman (1982), the scale assessed participant’s perceptions about quality of supervision. The items used a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1(not at all true) to 4(very true) and included statements such as “My supervisor is competent in doing his/her job.” Previous reliability tests indicate a Cronbach’s alpha of .91 (Jacquet et al., 2008).

**Job factors-intrinsic.** The survey includes three questions which may be considered to address the intrinsic nature of the job- department worked in, level of influence, and level of success.

**Department worked.** Participants were asked to indicate which departments or service areas they worked in during their work obligation, and given seven identified departments plus one “other” write-in option. For the current study, only responses to worked in adoptions (yes or no) are included in the analysis. Adoptions is the one department where the clientele are primarily voluntary as opposed to involuntary. Many participants in the interview data identified departments requiring work with involuntary clients as more stressful. Therefore, adoptions will be used as a proxy for the degree of stress inherent in the job due to client status.

**Level of influence.** Using a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (no influence) to 4 (much influence), participants are asked “In your work as a child welfare employee, how much influence do you believe you personally have to positively affect the clients you serve?”

**Level of success.** Participants are asked to respond to the question, “In your work as a child welfare employee, how would you describe the success you have in accomplishing

objectives and goals for the clients you serve?” The question uses a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (no success) to 4 (a high degree of success).

**Response to job factors.** The study examines burnout, job stress and job satisfaction as participants’ responses to job. Each variable is explored using a multi-item scale. All scales used in the current study have alphas within “respectable” (.70-.80) or “very good” ranges (.80-.90) (DeVellis, 2003).

**Burnout.** Burnout is measured using the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). The MBI consists of 22 items which comprise three subscales: emotional exhaustion (EE), depersonalization (DP), and personal accomplishment (PA) (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Participants are asked to indicate how often various feelings and events occur using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (“never”) to 6 (“every day”). The personal accomplishment subscale is reverse scored. Thus, high levels of burnout are reflected by high scores on emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, and low scores on personal accomplishment. The subscales have reliability alphas as follows: emotional exhaustion ( $\alpha = .90$ ), depersonalization ( $\alpha = .79$ ), and personal accomplishment ( $\alpha = .71$ ) (Tracy, Bean, Gwatkin, & Hill, 1992).

**Job stress.** This 17 item scale asks participants to rate the degree of stress of several situations, using a Likert scale ranging from “not at all stressful” to “very stressful”, with a 5<sup>th</sup> point for “not applicable”. These items include situations like “needing to work overtime” and “seeing severely abused children”, and includes two “other” write in options. The scale was adapted from previous social work retention research (Jayaratne, Chess, & Kunkel, 1986; Tracy et al., 1992). The overall scale has Cronbach’s alpha of reliability of .84 (Clark, 2003).

Exploratory factor analysis, excluding the two write-in options, was completed on the CalSWEC data (n=1102) using principal factoring with iteration and an orthogonal (varimax) rotation. Three factors emerged accounting for 51.3% of the variance, work-related, client-related, and visiting-related. Means rather than sums of the three factors are used in the analysis. The component loadings are presented in Table 6.3

Table 6.3 Job Stress Component Loadings

**Rotated Component Matrix<sup>a</sup>**

	Component		
	1	2	3
Providing backup for a worker	.021	.023	.745
Answering night phone calls	.050	.172	.743
Handling crisis calls	.268	.274	.620
High crime area visits	.134	.810	.117
Rural home visits	.087	.776	.092
Visits to Violent Clients	.138	.816	.170
Threatened with harm	.201	.633	.132
Working Overtime	.219	.177	.518
Visit in Bad Weather	.243	.441	.209
Remove a Child	.669	.191	.305
Appear in Court	.525	.065	.259
See Abused Children	.733	.200	.043
Terminate Rights	.739	.055	.097
Living Conditions	.704	.147	.005
Death of Child	.545	.174	.063

a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

**Job satisfaction.** This 22-item scale asks respondents to rate their level of satisfaction with various experiences or employment characteristics, using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“very dissatisfied”) to 5 (“very satisfied”). The scale contains characteristics like “Opportunities for promotion” and “The amount of paperwork.” Previous tests indicate the alpha coefficient for the scale is .86 (Clark, 2003). The scale was adapted from previous social work retention studies (Henry, 1990; Tracy et al., 1992; Vinokur-Kaplan, Jayaratne, & Chess, 1994).

Factor analysis was performed on the job satisfaction scale resulting in five factors accounting for 58% of the variance: client, growth/development, office, salary/benefits, and caseload/paperwork. The means for the five factors are used in the analysis. Table 6.4 shows the factor component loadings.

Table 6.4 Job Satisfaction Component Loadings

**Rotated Component Matrix<sup>a</sup>**

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
Supervisor Support	-.055	.550	.265	.043	-.120
Client Gratitude	.778	.095	-.037	.073	.192
Personal Growth	.171	.737	.065	.158	.195
Co-worker Support	.270	.479	-.035	-.074	.183
Relationship w Clients	.787	.123	.078	.001	.140
My Salary	.140	.107	.081	.091	.795
Non-Salary Benefits	.065	.150	.174	.050	.786
Promotion Opportunities	-.002	.609	.130	.090	.401
Client Success	.707	.168	.092	.027	-.105
Improve Knowledge	.217	.657	.193	.120	.092
Physical Surroundings	.012	.217	.306	.243	.210
Client Support	.815	.093	.055	.059	.171
Accomplishments	.515	.545	.127	.064	-.093
Professional Recognition	.374	.554	.054	.067	.070
Caseload Size	.073	.085	.125	.842	.047
Paperwork Load	.069	.095	.059	.854	.089
Authority-Decisions	.093	.358	.467	.299	.020
make a difference	.584	.279	.386	.128	-.128
Flexible Schedule	.039	.111	.789	.004	.176
Work Outside Office	.045	.058	.838	-.004	.134
Work Intensively w Clients	.346	.156	.558	.242	-.043

a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

**Proxy for County Environment and Moderator Variables**

**County.** A county group variable was created as a proxy for county level influences. Each participant's last county of employment is identified in the C.S.I.S. data. Some participants worked in more than one county during their contractual obligation. Therefore, last county was chosen as it reflects the county a participant was in when she or he completed their contractual obligation and had the choice to stay or leave public child welfare. Frequencies for the last county of employment indicated participants were located in 44 of California's 58 counties. However, several counties had less than 10 participants. Using geographic proximity, groups

were formed, collapsing smaller counties, such that 10 participants was the smallest grouping. The resulting county group variable has 22 categories.

**Non-work influences.** The survey includes a question assessing the importance of various reasons for leaving, such as burnout or desiring better pay. This question is answered by leavers and by stayers who have previously indicated an intention to leave. The nine items use a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “very unimportant” to “very important.” The author determined that four of the nine items reflected two of the conceptual model elements: *alternative job opportunities* and *non-work influences*, and should be included in the study. These items were: 1) “Changes in my family situation”; 2) “A desire to further my education”; 3) “A desire or need to live in a different location”; and 4) “The availability of other jobs.”

In order to clean up the data, two dummy variables were created: “not relevant” and “relevant”. All stayers were coded as not relevant since the goal was to understand the relevance of non-work influences for turnover. The value of the items is for assessing influence in actual turnover decisions. Any leaver who left these items blank was also coded as not relevant. The assumption is that if the participant did not respond to these items, but had filled out the rest of the survey, that these items were likely not relevant for that individual. Additionally, leavers who ranked the original items with a 1-3 were also coded as not relevant. The remaining scores of important and very important (4 & 5) were coded as relevant.

### **Analysis Plan**

Each year a new cohort of participants are recruited into the larger study. Survey data are entered into an SPSS database developed and maintained by CalSWEC on an ongoing basis. Once each cohort is entered into SPSS, they are merged into a larger dataset which includes participants from all years. The author was responsible for entering paper surveys for the 2007 and 2008 cohorts.

### **Data Cleaning**

The data have been cleaned at multiple points to reduce errors. After entry of the 2008 data was completed, a second researcher randomly selected 10% of paper surveys entered and examined for completeness. Then frequency tables were generated to assist with the detection of any errors in the dataset, such as coding errors, typing errors, and missing data. Once the paper survey data was cleaned, it was merged with the Survey Monkey data. Another set of frequency tables were generated to again check for any errors. Corrections were made to the data to remove coding or typing errors, and the 2008 data were merged into the larger dataset.

### **Missing Data**

Once all the current survey data were entered into SPSS 16 (2007) and merged with the larger dataset, an analysis was conducted determine the level and nature of data missing in the data set for this study. For two variables, race/ethnicity and age, data was pulled from the CalSWEC Student Information System (C.S.I.S.), which is the database for tracking all CalSWEC Title IV-E students and graduates, to fill in the missing information. A descriptive

analysis examining missing data in the remaining items revealed very low levels, with most items having less than 3% data missing. Two items were higher with 7.5% missing data for caseload size and 6.4% missing data for annual salary. An acceptable level for missing data is 20% or lower (Saunders, Morrow-Howell, Spitznagel, Dore, Proctor, & Pescarino, 2006). The levels indicated in the current study are well within the range considered acceptable. Given the low levels of missing data, the decision was made to impute data to replace the missing values. Imputation was performed by using each variable's series mean in SPSS 16 (2007).

### **Sample Differences and Model Testing**

The two connected goals for the study were to 1) determine predictors of staying or leaving, and 2) assess the usefulness of a comprehensive conceptual model. Bivariate analyses are first used to look for any significant differences between stayers and leavers. Since the dependent variable is dichotomous (stayer vs. leaver) and the independent variables are a combination of continuous and categorical variables, logistic regression procedures are utilized in order to determine overall fit for this set of independent variables. A series of regressions were run to determine which set of variables best explains retention. In model one, only *worker characteristics* were included. Model two examined the influence of *worker characteristics* and *extrinsic job factors*. Model three added *intrinsic job factors*, and model four represented the full model with *worker characteristics*, *extrinsic job factors*, *intrinsic job factors*, and *response to job factors*. Mediation effects are tested implicitly with the addition of new sets of variables with each model succession. A fifth model adds the county group variable in order to test for larger agency-wide influences. The potential for alternative job options and non-work influences to moderate the relationship between response to job and outcome is examined with an additional logistic regression model.

## CHAPTER 7. RESULTS

The purpose of this study was two-fold: to expand the current knowledge base in regards to what predicts retention among specially trained child welfare workers and to assess the usefulness of a comprehensive conceptual model for understanding retention and turnover. All quantitative data were entered into, and analyzed using SPSS 16. Bivariate and multivariate tests were employed to understand the variables that influence retention.

### Bivariate Analyses

Initial tests were run to assess any multicollinearity among the variables. Chi-squares and t-tests were also employed to identify differences and similarities between the two subgroups, stayers and leavers.

### Variable Correlations

Both bivariate correlation and collinearity diagnostics were examined. All variables were correlated below the acceptable level of .6 except for the supervisor support and quality supervision variables which were correlated at .759. Using the collinearity diagnostics in SPSS, it was found that the tolerance and variance inflation factor (VIF) numbers were within acceptable ranges (tolerance levels greater than .10, VIF values less than 10) for both supervisor support and quality supervision variables. However, each had a variance proportion higher than .50, confirming multicollinearity. When two variables closely overlap, our ability to assess the importance of the predictor variables on the outcome is weakened. One method for addressing the multicollinearity between two variables is by removing one. The supervisor support variable mirrors the peer support variable and provides a direct comparison of these two possible influences. Therefore, it was decided to keep the supervisor support variable and to remove the quality supervision variable from the regression analyses.

### Leaver/Stayer Differences

Bivariate tests, including chi-squares and t-tests, were used to examine differences between stayers and leavers for: 1) worker characteristics, 2) extrinsic job factors, 3) intrinsic job factors, and 4) response to job factors. Results show that stayers and leavers differed on several variables.

**Worker characteristics.** The worker characteristics addressed in this study were gender, race/ethnicity, previous county employment and age. Table 7.1 presents the findings for gender, race/ethnicity, and previous county employment. Pearson chi-square tests indicated no difference in gender for stayers and leavers ( $\chi^2 = 2.080$ , 1 df,  $p = .149$ ). There were significant differences between stayers and leavers in regards to race/ethnicity ( $\chi^2 = 11.309$ , 5 df,  $p = .046$ ). Among stayers, there were more African Americans and Hispanics than expected, and fewer American Indians and Other/Mixed than expected. There was also a significant difference among stayers and leavers for previous county employment, with more stayers indicating they had been employed by a county agency prior to, or during, their MSW education ( $\chi^2 = 11.937$ , 1 df,  $p = .001$ ).



Table 7.1 Gender, Race/Ethnicity and County Employment Differences

	<b>Stayers</b> (n= 940)		<b>Leavers</b> (n= 162)	
	n	%	n	%
<b>Gender</b>				
Female	788	83.8	143	88.3
Male	152	16.2	19	11.7
$\chi^2 = 2.080, 1 \text{ df}, p = .149$				
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>				
African American	139	14.8	15	9.3
American Indian	15	1.6	6	3.7
Asian American	89	9.5	16	9.9
Caucasian	360	38.3	64	39.5
Hispanic/Latino	250	26.6	37	22.8
Other/Mixed	87	9.3	24	14.8
$\chi^2 = 11.309, 5 \text{ df}, p = .046$				
<b>Prev. County Employment</b>				
No	581	61.8	123	75.9
Yes	359	38.2	39	24.1
$\chi^2 = 11.937, 1 \text{ df}, p = .001$				

A t-test comparing means was run for age. There was no significant difference between stayers and leavers for this variable (see Table 7.2).

Table 7.2 Mean Age for Stayers and Leavers

	<b>Stayers</b>		<b>Leavers</b>		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	Mean	Std.Dev.	Mean	Std.Dev.		
<b>Age</b>	33.96	8.67	33.15	9.03	-1.09	.275

**Extrinsic job factors.** Independent sample t-tests were used to compare differences between stayers and leavers on all the extrinsic job factors. Comparisons were made between data with missing values replaced and without replacement, with no variation in significance. The results of t-tests completed on data with missing values replaced (n=1102) are presented in Table 7.3. Stayers reported a significantly higher average salary than leavers ( $p = .000$ ), while leavers reported working more hours per week (45.01 vs. 43.12,  $p = .001$ ). Leavers also reported a slightly higher caseload size than stayers but the difference was not significant.

Both stayers and leavers report spending more time on paperwork than with clients. Leavers reported spending more time with clients, in the community, on paperwork, and in other tasks. However, none of these differences was significant. Stayers reported spending more time in planning activities but this also did not reach significance. The only area that was significant, with stayers reporting a higher percentage of time, was time spent in supervision (11.17 vs. 7.21,

$p = .000$ ). It is not clear from the question whether participants are referring to their own supervision or time spent supervising others.

Both groups scored peer support a little higher than supervisor support (3.47 and 3.48 vs. 3.24 and 3.02). Scores on peer support are almost identical for stayers and leavers, and not significant. Stayers ranked their supervisors significantly higher in regards to support ( $p = .003$ ) and quality of supervision ( $p = .042$ ) than leavers.

Table 7.3 Extrinsic Job Factors Among Stayers and Leavers

Variables	Stayers		Leavers		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	Mean	Std.Dev.	Mean	Std.Dev.		
<b>Salary</b>	52792.98	11557.38	47464.93	9868.92	-5.530	.000
<b>Hours</b>	43.12	6.06	45.01	6.40	3.497	.001
<b>Caseload size</b>	32.58	23.97	33.54	23.65	.472	.637
<b>% time :</b>						
<b>with clients</b>	37.37	19.27	39.38	16.98	1.249	.212
<b>in supervision</b>	11.17	14.89	7.21	7.81	-5.054	.000
<b>in planning</b>	4.05	9.89	3.24	7.42	-.995	.320
<b>in community</b>	3.56	6.69	3.78	6.99	.388	.698
<b>on paperwork</b>	40.21	19.05	41.94	16.20	1.227	.221
<b>other task</b>	3.64	11.08	4.44	10.51	.852	.395
<b>Supervisor support</b>	3.24	0.75	3.02	0.89	-2.986	.003
<b>Peer support</b>	3.47	0.58	3.48	0.56	.168	.866
<b>Quality super</b>	3.35	0.68	3.21	0.82	-2.042	.042

**Intrinsic job factors.** A chi-square statistic was run on the worked in adoption variable for sample who answered question (not including replaced missing data),  $n = 1080$ . There was no significant difference between stayers and leavers on this variable (Pearson chi-square = 2.417, 1 df,  $p = .120$ ). Independent sample t-tests were used to compare differences between stayers and leavers on the other two intrinsic job factors, perceived level of influence and perceived level of success (Table 7.4). Findings were similar for data with and without missing values replaced; therefore results here included replaced missing data ( $n = 1102$ ). Stayers had significantly higher means on both measures, indicating that they felt they had more influence in client's lives and more success in helping clients reach their goals.

Table 7.4 Levels of Influence and Success Among Stayers and Leavers

Variables	Stayers		Leavers		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	Mean	Std.Dev.	Mean	Std.Dev.		
<b>Influence</b>	3.11	0.67	2.90	0.71	-3.592	.000
<b>Success</b>	2.98	0.63	2.75	.66	-4.172	.000

**Response to job factors.** Independent sample t-tests were used to compare differences between stayers and leavers across the response to job measures of burnout, job satisfaction, and

job stress. As shown in Table 7.5, there were statistically significant differences in levels of burnout, satisfaction, and stress between stayers and leavers for almost all subscales. Leavers had higher levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, and lower levels of personal accomplishment (reverse scored), than stayers. Both stayers and leavers reported the highest levels of job satisfaction related to growth and development, and lowest levels of satisfaction with caseload and paperwork. Stayers reported higher levels of job satisfaction than leavers for all the subscales, although this did not reach significance for satisfaction with salary and benefits ( $p = .081$ ). Moderate levels of job stress were indicated by both stayers and leavers. Leavers indicated higher levels of all types of job stress, but the difference did not reach significance for visit-related stress ( $p = .316$ ).

Table 7.5 Burnout, Job Satisfaction and Job Stress Among Stayers and Leavers

Scales/Subscales	Stayers		Leavers		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	Mean	Std.Dev.	Mean	Std.Dev.		
<b>Burnout</b>						
Emotional Exhaustion	2.68	1.23	3.29	1.29	5.794	.000
Personal Accomplish.	4.48	0.84	4.29	0.80	-2.643	.008
Depersonalization	1.52	1.04	1.92	1.24	3.685	.000
<b>Job Satisfaction</b>						
Clients	3.57	0.71	3.36	0.77	-3.520	.000
Growth	3.59	0.68	3.41	0.68	-3.024	.003
Office	3.58	0.74	3.32	0.80	-4.128	.000
Salary/Benefits	3.31	1.02	3.16	1.04	-1.747	.081
Caseload/Paperwork	2.22	0.99	2.03	0.95	-2.209	.027
<b>Job Stress</b>						
Clients	2.97	0.60	3.16	0.61	3.682	.000
Visits	2.82	0.66	2.88	0.65	1.004	.316
Work/Office	2.51	0.64	2.72	0.63	3.892	.000

### Regression Models

Binary logistic regression analysis involving four models was performed for the outcome variable, retention, with worker characteristics, extrinsic job factors, intrinsic job factors, and response to job factors as predictor variables. These predictors were identified as important based on the theoretical and empirical literature as well as the study's qualitative findings. Given the exploratory nature of this study (testing a conceptual framework) all variables were entered into the models regardless of their outcomes in the bivariate analyses. An additional model was run to control for county-level differences. Table 7.6 displays the exponentiated coefficients (odds ratios) and confidence intervals for each of the predictor variables for Models 1-5. Significance at the .05, .01, and .001 levels are indicated.

#### Model 1

Only the worker characteristics are entered into the first model. The model's goodness of fit, the "success of predicting the dependent variable from the independent variables" is assessed by the Nagelkerke  $R^2$  (Nagelkerke, 1991, p. 691). The Nagelkerke  $R^2$  has a range of 0-1, with 0

indicating no fit and 1 indicating perfect fit. For this initial model, the Nagelkerke  $R^2$  is 0.046. Results indicate that gender and age were not predictive of retention. Previous county employment was predictive, indicating that not having worked in a county agency either prior to or while getting MSW degree decreased the odds of retention. Two race/ethnicity groups were also significant predictors of retention in comparison to the control group, African Americans. American Indians had decreased odds of retention. The odds of retention were also decreased for those participants indicating Other/Mixed for race/ethnicity. Cohort membership was also significant, indicating that participants from later years had decreased odds of retention.

## **Model 2**

For Model 2, all the worker characteristics were retained and the extrinsic job factor variables are added to the model. The Nagelkerke  $R^2$  is .189 reflecting an increase in the model's goodness of fit for explaining retention. An absence of previous county employment, reporting Other/Mixed, and cohort continue to be predictive for retention. Reporting race/ethnicity as American Indian is no longer significant ( $p = .107$ ).

Among the extrinsic job factors, % time spent on various tasks was not predictive of retention. Caseload size and peer support were also not significant. Salary, hours, and supervisor support were predictive of retention in the expected directions. For every dollar increase in salary, odds of retention were increased. For every hour increase in weekly hours worked, odds of retention were decreased. Supervisor support improved retention, with higher rankings of support increasing the odds of retention.

## **Model 3**

The three intrinsic job factor variables were added in Model 3. Goodness of fit improved (Nagelkerke  $R^2 = .212$ ). In this model, the worker characteristic of previous county employment remains significant, and in fact the odds increase slightly ( $\text{Exp (B)} = .60$  in Model 2,  $.62$  in Model 3). Other/Mixed and cohort also remain significant predictors of retention. For the extrinsic job factors, salary and hours remain significant, as does supervisor support. Level of success is the only intrinsic job factor which is significant for retention. As perceived level of success helping clients increases, the odds of retention increase. This finding fits with the qualitative findings indicating that positive intrinsic job factors were important for stayers.

## **Model 4**

Model 4 represents the full model with all factors included: worker characteristics, extrinsic job factors, intrinsic job factors, and response to job factors. The Nagelkerke  $R^2$  for the full model is .250. Previous county employment, Other/Mixed race/ethnicity, and cohort continued to significantly predict retention. Predictive significance also continued for the extrinsic job factors: salary, hours, and supervisor support. It appears that the level of success variable is mediated by the response to job variables. No intrinsic job factors were predictive of retention in the full model.

For the response to job factors, client-related stress was the only predictive variable. This variable illuminates stress related to intrinsic aspects of the job, such as client death, seeing severely abused children, and recommending termination of parental rights. As the level of client-related stress increases, the odds of retention decrease. Visit-related stress, approached significance ( $p = .062$ ) but not in the expected direction. Results indicate that increases in visit-related stress increase the odds of retention. One would expect that increases in any form of job stress would decrease odds of retention. Interestingly, none of the burnout subscales predicted retention. This finding contradicts the current research which indicates significance for the emotional exhaustion subscale (Dickinson & Perry, 2002; Drake & Yadama, 1996). Additionally, none of the job satisfaction subscales were predictive of retention.

## **Model 5**

Model 5 shows results, controlling for county differences. The variable, county group, was created based on the last county in which the participant was employed. This variable was added to the logistic regression model in order to control for larger environmental elements which might influence job experience and decisions to stay or leave. The model has a Nagelkerke  $R^2$  of .290. In this final model, previous county employment is no longer significant. Once county differences are controlled for, the effect of previous county employment differences is no longer significant. All the other variables that were significant predictors of retention in Model 4, Other/mixed, cohort, salary, hours, supervisor support, and client-related stress, remained significant in the final model.

Table 7.6 Logistic Regression Models 1-5 for Retention

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5(with county)	
	Exp(B)	95% CI	Exp(B)	95% CI	Exp(B)	95% CI	Exp(B)	95% CI	Exp(B)	95% CI
<b>Worker Characteristics</b>										
No PrevCntyEmp	0.52***	0.35	0.77	0.39	0.91	0.62*	0.41	0.95	0.64*	0.45
Female	0.69	0.41	1.16	0.39	1.20	0.67	0.38	1.17	0.67	0.38
American Indian	0.28*	0.09	0.84	0.37	1.22	0.39	0.12	1.30	0.46	0.14
Asian American	0.61	0.28	1.32	0.54	1.22	0.55	0.24	1.25	0.69	0.30
Caucasian	0.58	0.32	1.05	0.62	1.16	0.64	0.34	1.22	0.83	0.41
Hispanic/Latino	0.73	0.38	1.38	0.71	1.40	0.68	0.35	1.35	0.79	0.41
Other/Mixed	0.40*	0.20	0.81	0.40*	0.84	0.39*	0.18	0.82	0.45*	0.19
Age	1.00	0.98	1.02	1.01	1.03	1.01	0.98	1.03	1.00	0.98
Cohort	0.95*	0.90	1.00	0.81***	0.86	0.81***	0.75	0.86	0.79***	0.71
<b>Extrinsic Job Factors</b>										
Salary <sup>a</sup>		1.00***	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00***	1.00	1.00	1.00***	1.00
Hours		0.95***	0.92	0.98	0.98	0.95***	0.92	0.98	0.95***	0.92
% time -clients		0.30	0.01	0.80	0.34	0.34	0.01	0.97	0.31	0.01
% time -super		0.31	0.01	0.83	0.35	0.35	0.01	0.94	0.28	0.01
% time -planning		0.30	0.01	0.82	0.34	0.34	0.01	0.96	0.27	0.01
% time -commty		0.30	0.01	0.82	0.34	0.34	0.01	0.93	0.27	0.01
% time -paper		0.31	0.01	0.83	0.34	0.34	0.01	0.94	0.27	0.01
% time -other		0.30	0.01	0.82	0.34	0.34	0.01	0.96	0.27	0.01
Caseload		1.00	0.99	1.01	1.00	1.00	0.99	1.01	1.00	0.99
Sup. support		1.41**	1.13	1.76	1.73	1.38**	1.10	1.73	1.34*	1.03
Peer support		0.97	0.71	1.34	0.97	0.97	0.70	1.34	1.02	0.70
<b>Intrinsic Job Factors</b>										
Adoption						1.07	0.72	1.58	1.09	0.73
Influence						1.26	0.94	1.70	1.15	0.85
Success						1.52*	1.10	2.10	1.24	0.87
<b>Response to Job Factors</b>										
Burnout-EE						0.87	0.70	1.07	0.88	0.71
Burnout-PA						0.89	0.67	1.18	0.89	0.66
Burnout-DP						0.91	0.73	1.13	0.94	0.74
J. Sat-Client						1.36	0.96	1.92	1.36	0.95
J. Sat-Growth						0.81	0.55	1.20	0.83	0.55
J. Sat-Office						1.18	0.87	1.61	1.11	0.80
J. Sat-Sal/Ben						0.95	0.78	1.17	0.99	0.80
J. Sat-CasePaper						0.96	0.77	1.21	0.97	0.77
J. Stress-Client						0.61*	0.42	0.90	0.66*	0.44
J. Stress-Visits						1.38	0.98	1.93	1.29	0.91
J. Stress-Work						0.75	0.52	1.07	0.71	0.49
Nagelkerke <sup>2</sup>	.046		.189		.212		.250		.290	

\* = p &lt; .05, \*\* = p &lt; .01, \*\*\* = p &lt; .001

□ salary Exp(B) = 1.000078(Model 2), 1.000078(Model 3), 1.000082 (Model 4), 1.000097(Model 5)

## **Exploratory Analyses**

Additional post-hoc analyses were conducted to further explore variables significant for retention and turnover.

### **Non-Work Influences**

Additional logistic regression models were run to examine differences in the relevance of non-work influences among leavers only. A non-work composite variable, summing leaver responses to four items, was used as the outcome. Results indicate which worker characteristics and job factors influence the importance of non-work factors for decisions to leave. This non-work composite variable was made into a dichotomous variable with those with sums of 10 or less coded as 0, and those with sums of 11 or more coded as 1. Table 7.7 provides the odds and confidence intervals for the four logistic regression models run using the leavers only (n=162).

In the final model, only three variables had significant connections to how leavers scored non-work influences: cohort, burnout-emotional exhaustion, and visit-related job stress. Participants from later cohort years had higher sum scores for non-work influences. Participants who indicated higher levels of emotional exhaustion or visit-related stress had increased odds of ranking non-work influences as important for decisions to leave. This may support the qualitative findings that showed that non-work reasons for leaving were often tied to negative job experiences.

Table 7.7 Models 1-4 for Non-Work Influences

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	Exp(B)	95% CI		Exp(B)	95% CI		Exp(B)	95% CI		Exp(B)	95% CI	
<b>Worker Characteristics</b>												
Prev Chty Emp	0.85	0.36	2.03	0.88	0.34	2.30	0.79	0.29	2.12	0.55	0.17	1.72
Gender	0.69	0.22	2.14	0.88	0.27	2.83	0.88	0.27	2.89	0.36	0.09	1.50
American Indian	1.08	0.12	9.69	0.85	0.09	8.11	0.99	0.10	10.31	1.47	0.12	18.33
Asian American	0.40	0.08	2.07	0.42	0.07	2.48	0.40	0.07	2.46	0.26	0.03	2.22
Caucasian	0.83	0.22	3.22	0.83	0.19	3.57	0.84	0.18	3.83	1.02	0.18	5.92
Hispanic/Latino	0.55	0.13	2.25	0.60	0.13	2.87	0.59	0.12	3.00	0.59	0.09	3.88
Other/Mixed	0.44	0.10	1.97	0.34	0.07	1.79	0.34	0.06	1.89	0.37	0.06	2.47
Age	0.96	0.92	1.00	0.97	0.93	1.02	0.97	0.93	1.01	0.97	0.92	1.02
Cohort	1.19*	1.06	1.34	1.14	0.99	1.32	1.15	1.00	1.34	1.23*	1.03	1.46
<b>Extrinsic Job Factors</b>												
Salary				1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Hours				1.07*	1.00	1.14	1.07	1.00	1.14	1.04	0.96	1.12
Caseload				1.01	1.00	1.03	1.01	1.00	1.03	1.02	1.00	1.04
Sup. support				1.53	0.98	2.40	1.49	0.95	2.34	1.16	0.63	2.15
Peer support				1.24	0.60	2.53	1.43	0.67	3.04	1.59	0.69	3.67
<b>Intrinsic Job Factors</b>												
Adoption							0.78	0.34	1.76	0.67	0.26	1.75
Influence							0.69	0.37	1.27	0.48	0.22	1.07
Success							1.23	0.66	2.28	1.40	0.68	2.89
<b>Response to Job Factors</b>												
Burnout-EE										1.65*	1.00	2.72
Burnout-PA										0.68	0.36	1.30
Burnout-DP										0.67	0.42	1.09
J. Sat-Client										1.11	0.53	2.33
J. Sat-Growth										1.60	0.64	4.02
J. Sat-Office										1.12	0.59	2.12
J. Sat-Sal/Ben										1.32	0.85	2.06
J. Sat-CasePaper										1.49	0.90	2.48
J. Stress-Client										0.64	0.28	1.46
J. Stress-Visits										2.46*	1.17	5.16
J. Stress-Work										0.66	0.31	1.38

\* = p < .05, \*\* = p < .01, \*\*\* = p < .001



## **Response to Job as Dependent Variable**

While only client-related stress predicted retention in the full logistic regression model (Table 7.6, Model 4), earlier t-tests indicated significant differences between stayers and leavers on almost all response to job variables (satisfaction with salary and benefits, and visit-related stress were the two exceptions). To further explore mediating factors, worker and job factors were tested in linear regression models with the response to job variables as the dependent variables. Table 7.8 presents the standardized beta and t score for each of the worker characteristics and job factor variables for Burnout and Job Stress subscales. Table 7.9 presents the standardized beta and t score for each of the worker characteristics and job factor variables for Job Satisfaction subscales. Significance at the .05, .01, and .001 levels are indicated.

The three burnout subscales were very similar in regards to variables that were significant. Gender and age were significant predictors across the three subscales, as were % time spent on paperwork and perceived level of influence. Significant job factors for emotional exhaustion were in the expected direction. Increases in hours and time spent on paperwork increased the odds for high levels of emotional exhaustion while high levels of supervisor support decreased the odds.

Factors influencing the three job stress subscales were more varied. As might be expected level of success was significant for client-related stress, with high levels of success decreasing the odds of high levels of stress. Similarly, high levels of success decreased the odds of high levels of work-related stress. Being male decreased the odds of high levels for both client and visit-related job stress. Interestingly, higher levels of influence decreased the odds of high levels of visit-related stress.

Table 7.8 Burnout & Job Stress Subscales as Dependent Variable

	Burnout- Emotional Exhaustion		Burnout- Personal Accomplishment		Burnout- Depersonalization		Job Stress- Client		Job Stress- Visits		Job Stress- Work	
	Std. Beta	t	Std. Beta	t	Std. Beta	t	Std. Beta	t	Std. Beta	t	Std. Beta	t
<b>Worker Characteristics</b>												
PrevCtyEmp	-0.05	-1.71	-0.06*	-2.06	-0.03	-0.88	0.00	-0.30	0.03	0.93	0.00	0.09
Male	-0.08**	-2.94	0.08**	3.02	0.06*	2.14	-0.08**	-2.71	-0.20***	-6.56	-0.04	-1.41
American Indian	0.04	1.34	0.00	0.02	0.06*	2.17	0.04	1.23	0.05	1.60	0.06*	2.09
Asian American	0.10**	3.06	-0.05	-1.50	0.13***	3.91	0.08*	2.14	0.13***	3.59	0.09*	2.35
Caucasian	0.08	1.91	0.11**	2.63	0.21***	5.13	0.06	1.39	0.06	1.41	0.22***	5.01
Hispanic/Latino	0.00	0.11	-0.04	-1.10	0.07	1.77	0.04	1.01	0.09*	2.04	0.13**	3.06
Other/Mixed	0.03	1.02	0.02	0.61	0.07*	2.20	0.03	0.72	0.05	1.44	0.08*	2.32
Age	-0.10***	-3.28	0.17***	6.01	-0.18***	-6.17	0.05	1.39	-0.06	-1.87	-0.11***	-3.50
Cohort	-0.05	-1.61	-0.08**	-2.59	-0.05	-1.61	-0.03	-0.78	0.01	0.25	-0.05	-1.28
<b>Extrinsic Job Factors</b>												
Salary	-0.04	-1.24	0.03	1.02	-0.00	-0.23	0.00	-0.02	-0.05	-1.33	0.02	0.43
Hours	0.13***	4.84	0.01	0.52	0.04	1.49	-0.04	-1.18	-0.01	-0.34	0.04	1.28
% time -super	-0.02	-0.55	0.03	1.19	0.03	0.85	0.00	0.12	0.03	1.00	-0.03	-0.92
% time -planning	0.06*	2.19	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.03	0.01	0.28	0.03	0.87	0.03	0.98
% time -commty	-0.01	-0.47	-0.02	-0.60	-0.06*	-1.97	0.05	1.52	-0.02	-0.49	0.01	0.18
% time -paper	0.22***	6.42	-0.10**	-3.09	0.13***	3.85	0.06	1.54	0.05	1.42	0.13***	3.46
% time -other	0.05	1.80	0.02	0.59	0.04	1.20	0.03	1.07	0.00	-0.08	0.06	1.91
Caseload	0.05	1.81	0.00	-0.21	0.03	1.24	0.00	-0.22	0.00	-0.21	0.04	1.27
Sup. support	-0.17***	-6.30	0.02	0.57	-0.10***	-3.43	0.04	1.20	0.05	1.61	0.01	0.30
Peer support	0.01	0.41	0.07*	2.52	0.04	1.54	0.06	1.81	0.06	1.88	0.05	1.50
<b>Intrinsic Job Factors</b>												
Adoption	0.00	-0.34	-0.03	-1.14	-0.03	-0.96	-0.02	-0.56	0.00	0.04	0.01	0.38
Influence	-0.05	-1.77	0.20***	6.83	-0.13***	-4.13	-0.06	-1.79	-0.10**	-3.05	-0.09**	-2.83
Success	-0.18***	-5.96	0.28***	9.47	-0.21***	-6.95	-0.13***	-3.87	-0.06	-1.80	-0.12***	-3.73

\* = p < .05, \*\* = p < .01, \*\*\* = p < .001

Table 7.9 Job Satisfaction Subscales as Dependent Variable

	Job Satisfaction- Client		Job Satisfaction- Growth		Job Satisfaction- Office		Job Satisfaction- Salary		Job Satisfaction- Caseload	
	Std. Beta	t	Std. Beta	t	Std. Beta	t	Std. Beta	t	Std. Beta	t
<b>Worker Characteristics</b>										
PrevCntryEmp	-0.03	-0.95	-0.05	-1.86	-0.02	-0.83	-0.09**	-2.85	-0.05	-1.82
Male	0.00	-0.19	0.00	-0.13	0.01	0.50	-0.05	-1.53	0.01	0.38
American Indian	0.01	0.51	0.00	0.04	-0.06*	-1.97	-0.03	-0.95	-0.03	-1.17
Asian American	0.00	-0.23	0.00	-0.06	-0.07*	-2.02	0.00	-0.17	-0.04	-1.07
Caucasian	-0.04	-1.07	0.01	0.34	-0.06	-1.32	0.02	0.46	-0.06	-1.50
Hispanic/Latino	-0.01	-0.28	-0.03	-0.80	-0.03	-0.81	0.04	1.04	-0.05	-1.21
Other/Mixed	0.02	0.71	0.00	0.13	-0.07*	-1.98	0.02	0.46	-0.05	-1.55
Age	0.12***	4.36	0.08**	2.72	-0.06*	-2.13	0.00	-0.04	0.02	0.62
Cohort	0.10***	3.22	0.03	0.89	-0.07*	-2.18	-0.12***	-3.19	0.07*	1.98
<b>Extrinsic Job Factors</b>										
Salary	-0.04	-1.14	0.04	1.26	0.06	1.70	0.26***	7.22	0.00	0.10
Hours	0.00	-0.06	0.02	0.69	-0.04	-1.35	-0.04	-1.48	-0.14***	-4.95
% time -super	-0.06*	-2.01	0.01	0.41	-0.11***	-3.53	-0.08*	-2.43	0.03	0.89
% time -planning	-0.02	-0.76	0.00	-0.11	-0.10***	-3.42	-0.02	-0.60	-0.05	-1.81
% time -commty	0.01	0.30	0.02	0.82	0.02	0.66	0.01	0.45	0.09**	2.89
% time -paper	-0.08*	-2.48	-0.12***	-3.66	-0.17***	-4.85	-0.06	-1.61	-0.24***	-6.90
% time -other	-0.04	-1.27	0.04	1.26	-0.02	-0.58	0.03	1.05	-0.06*	-2.08
Caseload	0.00	-0.08	-0.01	-0.46	0.00	0.14	-0.03	-0.96	-0.18***	-6.13
Sup. support	0.03	1.31	0.36***	13.54	0.24***	8.68	0.07*	2.19	0.12***	4.05
Peer support	0.06*	2.18	0.17***	6.26	0.09**	3.15	0.06*	2.11	0.02	0.56
<b>Intrinsic Job Factors</b>										
Adoption	0.02	0.80	0.00	-0.33	-0.02	-0.57	-0.02	-0.77	-0.02	-0.88
Influence	0.25***	8.59	0.14***	4.80	0.18***	5.91	0.04	1.20	-0.02	-0.69
Success	0.33***	11.48	0.15***	5.19	0.09**	2.83	0.03	0.77	0.07*	2.14

\* =  $p < .05$ , \*\* =  $p < .01$ , \*\*\* =  $p < .001$

Supervisor support was significant, increasing the odds, for all job satisfaction subscales except client-related. Interestingly, peer support was significant for client-related satisfaction. Peer support also increased the odds of higher levels of growth-, office-, and salary-related job satisfaction. Level of influence was significant for all subscales except salary- and caseload-related. Higher levels of influence increased the odds of higher levels of job satisfaction. Higher levels of success increased the odds of higher levels of satisfaction for client-, growth-, and office-related subscales.

### **Summary**

Bivariate and multivariate tests were used to assess differences between stayers and leavers. The bivariate analyses indicated that there are significant differences between stayers and leavers in all categories of factors- worker characteristics, extrinsic job factors, intrinsic job factors, and response to job factors; although not for every variable. Logistic regression models reflected that at least one variable from each category predicts retention.

The worker characteristics of cohort and other/mixed ethnicity predicted retention across all five models. Previous county employment was significant through model 4, but dropped out once county differences were controlled for (model 5). Three extrinsic job factors, salary, hours, and supervisor support, were significant across all models. Level of success was predictive of retention when intrinsic job factors are first entered (model 3), but loses significance when the response to job factors are added (model 4). Client-related job stress is the only response to job factor which predicted retention.

Exploratory analyses further identified variables that influence job experiences and decisions to stay or leave. One worker characteristic, cohort, and two response to job factors, burnout-emotional exhaustion, and visit-related job stress, influenced the importance of non-work influences for leavers. A myriad of worker characteristics, extrinsic job factors and intrinsic job factors predicted different response to job factors, with no single factor being predictive of all.

## CHAPTER 8. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The results of the study reflect the complex reasons behind decisions made by public child welfare workers to stay in or leave their jobs. Additional exploratory analysis of the quantitative data, as well as coding of the qualitative data also illuminated important relationships between worker characteristics, job factors, response to job factors, and retention/turnover. The study results provide direction for future research, as well as suggested areas for improvement within public child welfare and social work education.

### **Overview of Significant Findings**

The full regression model (Model 4) produced significant variables in three of the four key model elements. Among the worker characteristics, previous county employment, identifying as other/mixed, and cohort membership predicted retention. Previous county employment increased the odds of retention. This finding supports the findings of an earlier CalSWEC study (Jacquet et al., 2008), which otherwise stands alone. No other retention study of Title IV-E participants compares those with previous county employment to those without (Cahalane & Sites, 2008; Robin & Hollister, 2002). In some states, all Title IV-E participants are previous county employees. Identifying as other/mixed decreased the odds of retention. These findings are not replicated in the current literature. Few studies have included race/ethnicity and those that did, found no significance for it (Glisson & James, 2002; Jones, 2002). Membership in later cohorts also decreased the odds of retention. The few retention studies that are longitudinal do not indicate any findings for cohorts (Curry, McCarragher, & Dellman-Jenkins, 2005; Jones, 2002; O'Donnell & Kirkner, 2009). CalSWEC appears to have the longest ongoing study of retention.

Three extrinsic job factors predicted retention. Increases in salary increased the odds of retention. This finding conforms with an earlier CalSWEC study which also found significance for salary (Dickinson & Perry, 2002). Higher levels of hours worked decreased the odds of retention. This is another variable that very few studies have examined. The findings of the current study are in opposition to the limited literature findings where hours did not predict retention behavior (Dickinson & Perry, 2002; Weaver et al., 2007) or predicted in the opposite direction (Balfour & Neff, 1993). In the current study, the level of supervisor support increased the odds of retention. This is a well-supported finding in the literature (Dickinson & Painter, 2009; Scannapieco & Connell-Carrick, 2007; Smith, 2005; Yankeeelov et al., 2009).

None of the intrinsic job factors predicted retention in the full regression model. The intrinsic nature of the job is a relatively unexplored area within child welfare retention research. The one study which attempted to address positive intrinsic job factors also did not find significance (Smith, 2005). However, it is difficult to reach any conclusions since the current study and Smith (2005) did not use the same measures.

Only client-related stress predicted retention among the response to job variables. As levels of client-related stress increase, the odds of retention decrease. Job stress is another variable not consistently examined. However, two studies (one qualitative and one quantitative)

do support the role of job stress in decisions to leave (Gonzalez et al., 2009; Robin & Hollister, 2002).

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study examined the retention of Title IV-E MSW graduates in public child welfare in California. The findings may not be generalizable to the entire U.S. or to all public child welfare workers. However, it is expected that what predicts retention for specially trained workers will have some meaning for public child welfare workers in general. Additionally, the study suffers from sample response bias and does not represent the population in regards to ethnicity or retention status. Therefore, the study findings may not fully represent what predicts retention in the population. Regardless, the sample is relatively large for such a study and provides insight into why workers decide to stay or leave.

The study is restricted in its ability to address all elements relevant to retention due to being a secondary analysis of existing data. Management researchers stress the need for studies that examine the effects of the external environment, internal organizational characteristics and worker characteristics (Mowday et al., 1982; Roberts, Hulin & Rousseau, 1978). The current study successfully addresses many internal organizational characteristics and worker characteristics, but is limited in the study of external environment factors. Attempts to address the external environment are made with the use of the cohort and county group variables in retention regression models, and the additional analyses examining non-work influences for leavers. Despite the limitations of the current study, the results offer many implications for social work education, management, theory and research.

### **Implications for Education**

The study's quantitative analysis points to several factors that predict retention, some of which may be out of the purview of Title IV-E MSW programs. However, there are a few areas that may be addressed in the educational setting.

#### **Worker Characteristics**

Given the significant findings for previous county employment, individual Title IV-E programs may want to partner with area county child welfare agencies to target more Title IV-E MSW slots to existing employees. Furthermore, the findings for previous county employment suggest a need to improve any job preview structure provided for those new to the counties. Focus groups or surveys targeting retained previous county employees could provide insight into how to improve Title IV-E MSW curricula and field instruction.

#### **Job Factors and Responses to Job**

While Title IV-E programs do not have control over job factors, to the extent that the education can prepare participants for the extrinsic and intrinsic aspects of the job, retention may be improved. Research suggests that realistic job previews should improve worker retention in child welfare (Faller, Masternak, Grinnell-Davis, Grabarek, Sieffert, & Bernatovicz, 2009; Graef

& Potter, 2002). Field placements provide an opportunity for realistic job preview but have mixed results. Some participants in the qualitative interviews indicated that only having four cases or working only two days a week during field placements did not sufficiently reflect the work. Therefore schools may want to investigate how field placements are structured.

Additionally, the feeling reported by many participants that they were not prepared for the reality of the job may suggest a need to introduce new components to the Title IV-E program that better illuminate the emotional aspects of the job. Better preparation for the nature of the job could also influence the degree of job stress related to client issues, which was found to predict retention. Many participants also described a lack of preparation for working in bureaucratic settings. Often, social workers are not taught how to work in bureaucracies (Lait & Wallace, 2002). Given the need for policies and regulations in the child welfare system it is unlikely that the bureaucracies will be dismantled. Thus it is recommended that schools of social work consider designing courses that increase students' awareness of bureaucratic conditions in child welfare and other social work organizations, as well as provide tools for how to balance professional and bureaucratic needs.

### **Implications for Child Welfare Agencies**

This study examining reasons why specially-trained workers stay or leave public child welfare also has several implications for management within the county agency setting. Again, the conceptual model provides a framework for discussing the implications.

#### **Worker Characteristics**

The implications of the findings for cohort membership and identifying as other/mixed are not clear. There may be external elements influencing the cohort results that are beyond the control of county agencies. On the other hand, if years of more turnover than expected can be linked to internal issues such as child death or organizational restructuring, county agencies may want to examine how they manage such situations and how supports to staff can be increased during such times. As previously stated, the other/mixed category is not a strong distinct identifier, so it may also reflect an area that counties cannot address.

However, one worker characteristic with clear implications is previous county employment. If counties are interested in improving the retention of competent, well-trained workers, they might explore more opportunities to connect current employees with Title IV-E MSW programs. Counties may want to consider supporting further research which taps into this group of retained workers to find out exactly what it is about the combination of previous county employment and Title IV-E MSW education that increases the odds for retention. These participants may feel increased competency in their jobs after getting their MSW, as is expressed by some in the qualitative interviews. The increased odds of retention for previous county employees may also in part be due to the loyalty and commitment produced when an agency supports a worker in furthering his or her education.

## **Extrinsic Job Factors**

Salary was predictive of retention, but increases in salary provided very minor increases in odds of retention and may not be the most important area for focusing improvement efforts. Additionally, the qualitative data indicated that stayers described good salaries as part of their reason for staying, but leavers rarely mentioned poor salaries as a reason for leaving. Still, counties may want to assess how their salary levels fare against other human service jobs and see if there are any areas for improvement. Average weekly hours may be an area that management can more easily address. While overtime may be necessary in times of staff shortages, efforts should be made whenever possible to minimize overtime across workers. Leavers averaged only two more hours per week than stayers (45 vs. 43) but this difference was sufficiently significant to predict retention when all other variables are controlled.

The importance of supervisor support provides a clear implication for county agencies: ensure consistent, effective, and supportive supervision to all workers. As previously stated, California has in the last three years designed and implemented a statewide, required training curricula for supervisors. Evaluation of these efforts and their potential link to worker retention is needed. Additionally, research suggests that increasing the support given to supervisors aids in their ability to support those staff they direct (Strand & Bosco-Ruggiero, 2010). Counties should explore opportunities beyond training to increase support mechanisms for supervisors.

## **Response to Job Factors**

It would be easy to argue that client related stress is the nature of the job and that county agencies can do nothing to change that. However, the qualitative data would indicate it is more complex and that it is a combination of extrinsic and intrinsic job factors which then leads to turnover. It is recommended that counties explore opportunities to improve and ensure competent supervisory support for all workers. Counties may also want to examine what practices are in place when a child death occurs and how the worker and department is supported in such a situation.

Additionally, while not addressed in the quantitative analysis, the issue of worker-department fit was brought up in the interview data and is an area for improvement. Worker-department fit can influence both job stress and job satisfaction. The qualitative data indicated that different workers may fit better in different departments. Some participants described staying because they were transferred into less stressful departments such as adoptions, whereas other participants described themselves as adrenaline junkies and stated that they stayed because they were switched into more stressful departments such as emergency response. Therefore it is recommended that counties pay attention to and honor where workers say they prefer to work. This may not always be possible as staff shortages dictate placement, however, efforts should then be made to move employees as soon as feasible, and as long as they still wish to move. Relatedly, being honest with workers is another recommendation. Some of the leavers who were not allowed to transfer described being lied to and strung along. Certainly, this perception of dishonesty and lack of concern for the worker will impact job stress and job satisfaction.



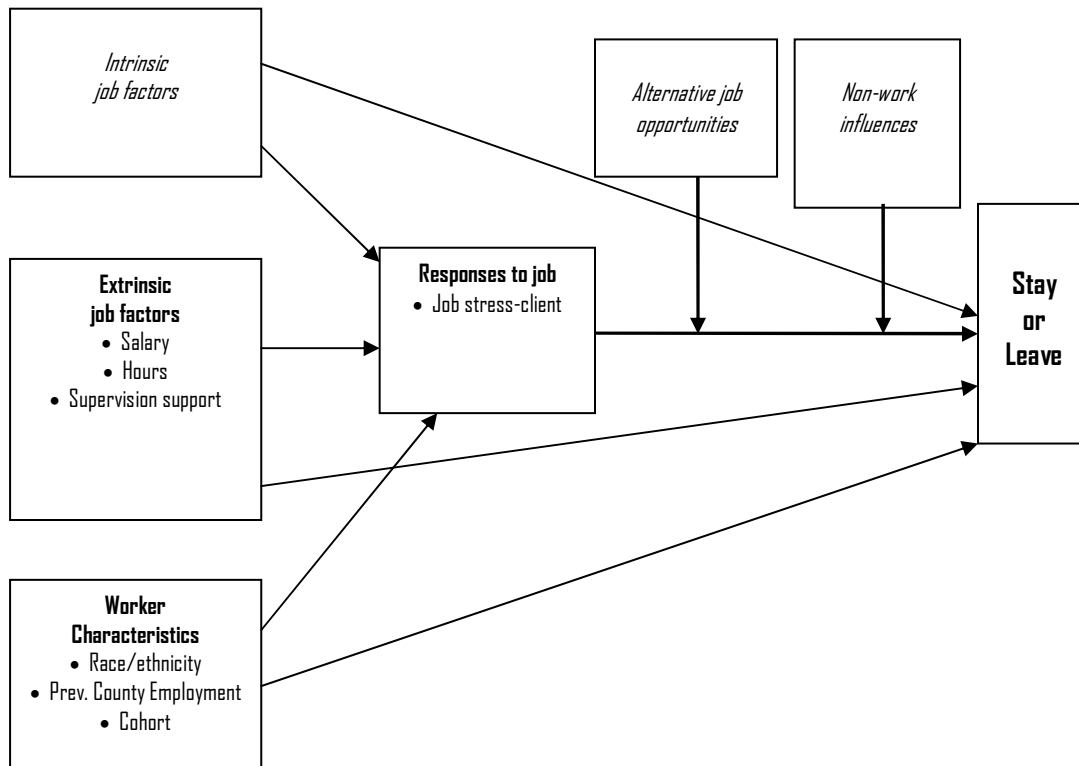
## Implications for Theory and Research

The study provides implications regarding the use of a conceptual model and building theory for child welfare worker retention. Findings from the key model elements also offer suggestions for future research.

### The Conceptual Model

First and foremost the current study supports the use of a comprehensive conceptual model for studying retention and turnover behaviors of public child welfare workers. The building of this conceptual model was inspired by the lack of, and need for more, theoretical frameworks in the study of child welfare retention (Mor Barak et al., 2001; Strolin, McCarthy, & Caringi, 2007) as well as the abundance of inconclusive findings. Figure 8.1 presents the conceptual model, indicating the elements which had significant findings in the full regression.

Figure 8.1 Conceptual Model with Significant Variables



The conceptual model confirmed that factors influencing the decision to stay or leave come from more than one category of factors and that studying only responses to job (e.g., burnout) or only job factors (e.g., supervisor support) will not provide an accurate picture. As can be noted in the figure, not every element produced significant findings. However, it is recommended to not remove any elements from the model at this time. This study employed secondary data analysis and was limited in how it could measure the three elements lacking significant variables: *intrinsic job factors*, *alternative job options*, and *non-work influences*. The initial qualitative findings very strongly suggested the need to separate out intrinsic and extrinsic

job factors. The third regression model supported this distinction with level of success representing an intrinsic job factor that significantly predicted retention, while several extrinsic job factors also continued to predict retention. It was only with the adding of *response to job factors* that level of success lost significance. Therefore, it is suggested that further work is needed to determine how to appropriately identify and measure intrinsic job factors. Alternative job options and non-work influences could not be measured for the entire sample and in the end could not be assessed in the full regression model. However, cohort membership was significant which suggests the possibility that there are external environmental influences on retention. Thus, an area of the model that needs improvement is external influences.

Due to the lack of theoretically-based research, there is still a need for more theory building. A research framework based in theory would be useful for communities that continue to struggle with high turnover rates. The model used in the current study could be replicated with other samples in other states in order to strengthen our understanding of what factors predict retention. Studies employing the comprehensive model to examine differences between Title IV-E and non Title IV-E workers would be especially useful.

## **Worker Characteristics**

The significance of previous county employment for retention suggests the need to study this variable in other settings. Do other states which also have a mix of Title IV-E participants also have increased odds of retention for those participants with previous county experience? Additionally, further exploration of this variable is warranted. Some participants had previous or concurrent county employment in child welfare settings and some had their previous employment in other county departments. It is not clear if the department of previous employment makes a difference. In other words, what aspects of the previous experience best prepares these participants: direct experience in a child welfare setting or direct experience in a county, bureaucratic setting?

The findings for the race/ethnicity category of other/mixed are not easy to interpret. This category is a collapsed grouping of those who indicated multiple ethnicities, those who indicated mixed ethnicity and those who had checked other. The other category on the survey had space for participants to specify their identification. Many participants left this blank. There is wide variation among those who did write in responses with examples such as “Arab American” and “Italian American”. Therefore, the other/mixed category in no way represents a single group for which conclusions could be made. If a concern is whether county agencies are able to retain a diverse pool of workers, it may make more sense for future research to examine minority and non-minority status rather than identification with specific groups. If there is interest in the representation of specific groups in the child welfare workforce then it may be necessary to increase the number of categorical options (for example, the current survey does not have a clear category for those coming from Arab countries) and to drop the “other” category.

Similarly, it is not clear why cohort was predictive of retention for this sample. In an earlier bivariate analysis, the difference between stayers and leavers was not significant using a Pearson chi-square ( $p = .356$ ), but was significant using a linear by linear association chi-square ( $p = .05$ ). A visual scan of the cross-tabs indicates that from 2004 on, all cohorts had greater

turnover than would be expected. Further research would be needed to understand what elements, internal (e.g., highly publicized child deaths, organizational restructuring) and external (e.g., implementation of the federal Child and Family Services Reviews) to each county, might have influenced retention behaviors during this time period.

### **Job Factors-Extrinsic and Intrinsic**

Supervisor support continues to be a significant factor for worker retention. What is needed now are intervention studies to determine best practices for improving supervision. There is current, ongoing research which identifies the implementation of improved or expanded supervisor training and support (Collins-Camargo, Sullivan, Washeck, Adams, & Sundet, 2009; Landsman, 2007; Renner, Porter & Priester, 2009). California has also recently implemented statewide supervisor training curricula. However, all these efforts are relatively recent and it is too soon to form conclusions.

The salary and hours worked findings are in the expected directions, with salary increasing the odds of retention and hours decreasing the odds. However, each variable may also be explaining unidentified variables and need further research. For example, it is not clear from the data which participants have been promoted to supervisory positions and which are still in direct practice. Therefore, the increased odds of retention for salary may actually reflect increased odds of retention for promotional opportunities, which has mixed findings in the literature (Dickinson & Perry, 2002; Smith, 2005). Hours worked may be related to workload, which has been identified as an issue in child welfare but is not consistently defined (Ellett et al., 2007; IASWR, 2005). One study indicates that workload can be defined by a breakdown of the time spent in various tasks (Rauktis & Koeske, 1994). The categories for time spent on various tasks were not significant for predicting retention in the current study but did predict some levels of job satisfaction, burnout, and job stress in the additional exploratory analysis. It is suggested that a variable addressing both hours worked and time spent on various tasks be designed to assess workload in the next wave of the CalSWEC study. Additionally other studies examining hours worked and workload with other child welfare samples would be useful.

The predictive significance for the variable level of success in the third model, and the significance of client-related stress in the fourth model, indicate the need for further research to distinguish and articulate intrinsic and extrinsic job factors. As a secondary data analysis, the current study was limited by existing survey questions and thus, variables identifying intrinsic job factors were few. The job stress and job satisfaction scales address the response to intrinsic and extrinsic job factors and point to the importance of stress related to intrinsic job factors (i.e., client-related stress). However, the job stress scale does not identify occurrence. It is suggested that a scale be designed in order to gauge not only degree of stress caused by intrinsic and extrinsic components but to determine actual frequency of events and see impact of frequency on retention and turnover. Better identification of the occurrence of extrinsic and intrinsic job factors, as well as how they interact with each other, could improve our understanding of retention along with the constructs, role conflict and role ambiguity.

## Response to Job Factors

As a group, further research is recommended for exploring the relationship of responses to job with actual retention. The lack of significant findings for any of the job satisfaction subscales does not support the argument for multi-item scales (Judge & Church, 2000; Tett & Meyer, 1993). However, the bivariate analysis did indicate significant differences between stayers and leavers on all subscales except salary. This is even more remarkable when one remembers that salary significantly predicted retention.

As suggested, the use of subscales for job stress successfully identified particular aspects of the job that created intolerable stress. The client-related stress items represent the nature of child welfare work and are elements that cannot be changed. However, there may be interaction effects that require further exploration. The qualitative data suggested that extrinsic job factors impeded workers' ability to handle the negative intrinsic factors which are then represented by client-related stress. The additional exploratory quantitative analysis which utilized response to job subscales as the dependent variable, indicated that level of success predicted client-related job stress. Thus, a participant's perception of their ability to help clients directly impacts the level of stress they feel related to seeing severely abused children and having to recommend termination of parental rights. What is not clear is which factors influence a participant's perception of success.

Burnout is a popular variable in turnover research (Drake & Yadama, 1996; O'Donnell & Kirkner, 2009; Reagh, 1994; Samantrai, 1992), which makes it interesting that none of the burnout scales predicted retention for this sample. For the current study, comparison of the subscales' means did indicate a significant difference between stayers and leavers for emotional exhaustion, personal accomplishment, and depersonalization. However, in the full regression model, burnout appears to be mediated by other factors, most obviously, supervisor support. Comparison studies of Title IV-E and non Title IV-E workers might provide further illumination on burnout, job stress, and retention. It may be that the specialized training Title IV-E workers receive better prepares them to manage stress and burnout, and to use their supervision more effectively.

The study results offer many insights for future theory and research on child welfare retention. However, it is important to note that at least for this study sample, retention was not a serious problem (85% stayers). This is in part due to response bias but still raises some important questions for the field: what is a satisfactory retention rate? And how long is sufficient? The study sample is measured for retention after a minimum of 2.5 years in public child welfare. What is the typical tenure of a first job post-MSW degree? Perhaps 2-3 years is to be expected. Additionally, while it is assumed that turnover is detrimental to service provision there are very few studies that link retention to client outcomes. It may be that retention is not the variable to be studied. It may not matter for client outcomes that staff are retained if those staff are poorly trained or emotionally exhausted. One study has linked organizational culture to service provision, indicating that staff in more constructive cultures were more likely to link clients with mental health services than in less constructive cultures (Glisson & Green, 2006).

Based on this discussion of implications, the questions in Figure 8.2 constitute a beginning agenda to shape future research on child welfare workers.

Figure 8.2 Future Research Questions

To inform theory:

1. Does the model provide the same outcomes when replicated with other samples?
2. What are the roles of intrinsic and extrinsic job factors and how do the two interact?
3. What is the role played by the external environment and how can external environment variables be better incorporated into a conceptual model for retention and turnover?

To inform research practice:

1. What is a satisfactory retention rate? What is a satisfactory tenure?
2. How does the average tenure of child welfare positions compare with other MSW jobs?
3. How does the retention rate of non Title IV-E workers compare with Title IV-E workers?
4. How do Title IV-E workers compare to non Title IV-E workers in regards to responses to the job?
5. Can we connect retention to client outcomes or are there more pertinent variables to explore (such as organizational culture)?
6. How does prior county experience influence retention?
7. What are best practices for improving supervision?
8. How can the measurement of intrinsic job factors be improved?

## Conclusion

While there are limitations to the current study, there are also several advantages which strengthen the findings. The first strength of the study is that it is well grounded in both theoretical and empirical literature. The conceptual model successfully identifies the complexity of the process that leads to retention and turnover behavior. Second, the study used actual retention behavior as the outcome rather than using intent to stay as a proxy for retention. Additionally, the study includes data drawn directly from both stayers and leavers instead of asking only stayers or administrators what they think influences worker retention and turnover. Finally, the study examines retention six months to a year after participants have completed their contractual obligation, when retention/turnover decisions will not be influenced by a concern about paying back money. These dynamics strengthen the study findings and reflect an improvement over much of what is in the recent child welfare retention literature.

The study findings may be used to inform child welfare workforce research, agency practice, and Title IV-E MSW programs. The conceptual model identified and tested in this study presents a basic framework on which future research could be based. Methods for measuring

intrinsic job factors require further development, and the roles and relationships of extrinsic and intrinsic job factors need further exploration. Still, replication of this model with other samples would enhance our understanding of the variables which lead to worker retention. Efforts which support existing county employees participating in Title IV-E MSW programs should be continued and considered for expansion. Similarly any efforts to expand and improve supervisor training should be continued, evaluated for impact, and revised if not helping to improve retention. Finally, while client-related stress may be the nature of the job, it is suggested that there are still ways that researchers, educators, and county administrators can work to help participants manage this stress and stay on the job longer.

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## Appendices

## Appendix A

### **Retention Interview Instrument**



ID#:

Date of Interview:

1. **What is your understanding of the intent of the Title IV-E program?**
2. **How did you feel about participating in that program?**
3. **What were your principal reasons for entering the child welfare field?**
4. **Why did you want to get a MSW?**  
Prompt: **Ask them to reflect back on their motivations, past practice experiences, and aspirations prior to beginning their studies and ask them if there have been any changes since then in who and where they wanted to work with and at. Get their stories.**

**The next questions are about your job with the agency where you completed your payback.**

5. **What were/are your job roles responsibilities? What did/do you do?**  
Prompt: **Do/did you do anything other than your standard job at the agency? (Ex. Field placement supervisor, program development, community liaison, volunteer etc. – get an idea of formal and other activities they are engaging in within the agency – Are these 'other' activities a requirement of all staff or something they volunteered to do)**
6. **What aspects of your job do/did you like the most?**  
Prompt: **Contrast with feelings about current job if not in public CW.**
7. **What aspect of your job do/did you like the least?**  
Prompt: **Contrast with feelings about current job if not in public CW.**
8. **Are you able to practice what you learned at your school about being a child welfare worker in your job as a child welfare worker?**  
Prompt: **Are there opportunities to put practice skills to work?**
9. **Would you recommend your agency to others looking for employment in social work?**  
Prompt: **Why or why not?**
10. **Would you recommend public child welfare services to others looking for employment in social work?**  
Prompt: **Why or why not?**
11. **Now that you have your MSW how do your most recent experiences in child welfare compare to past social work related work experiences?**  
Prompt: **Inquire about any previous Social Work experience (esp. If in Child Welfare field) excluding field placement experience - get specifics about past experience in terms of field, methods, pop's served & detailed differences related to positive and negative experiences.**

12. **How would you describe the working conditions at your agency?**  
Prompt: **Do you feel your agency is comparatively worse or better than other/past settings?**
- ⇒ **If so - How?**  
Prompt: **What were your expectations?**
13. **Could you describe the clients you worked with.**  
⇒ **Problems respondent worked with, for example demographics etc.**
14. **Did your education prepare you for your job in public child welfare.....?**  
Prompt: **In terms of clients, problems, the nature of the work, etc., what were you ...**  
⇒ **best prepared for?**
- ⇒ **not prepared for?**
15. [If the participant stayed in public child welfare after the payback agency...]**Why do you stay?**  
Prompt: **What can your agency, the county, and university do to help or encourage you to stay?**
- Prompt: **Do you have any ongoing contact with your alma mater or another university?**  
(Ask if s/he is involved in continuing education, alumni activities, teaching, research, etc.)
16. [If the subject DID NOT stay with the payback agency...]**What led you to leave your job?**  
Prompt: **What could the agency, county, and university have done to keep you?**
- Prompt: **Do you have any ongoing contact with your alma mater or another university?**  
(Ask if s/he is involved in continuing education, alumni activities, teaching, research, etc.)
17. **Do you see public child welfare as the field for your overall career objectives?**
18. **What else would you like to say about your job, IV-E stipend, your university experiences or this survey?**

We may be interested in using an exact quote in a report or publication. If we do not use anything that would identify you in any way, would you allow us to use something you have said?

\_\_\_ NO     \_\_\_ YES

Do you have any questions at this time?

If you have any further questions please feel free to call us at 510- 642-9272 or 510-643-9846. You may also visit the CalSWEC webpage at [www.calswec.edu](http://www.calswec.edu), where the results will be posted when we have completed the study. Thank you very much for your participation, it was nice talking to you.

Appendix B

**Retention Survey Instrument**



*a partnership for change*

CSU, Bakersfield  
CSU, Chico  
CSU, Fresno  
CSU, Hayward  
CSU, Long Beach  
CSU, Los Angeles  
CSU, Sacramento  
CSU, San Bernardino  
CSU, Stanislaus  
Loma Linda University  
San Diego State University  
San Francisco State University  
San Jose State University  
University of California, Berkeley  
University of California, Los Angeles  
University of Southern California  
58 Counties  
County Welfare Directors Association  
California Mental Health Directors Association  
California Department of Social Services  
Foundations  
NASW, California Chapter

Congratulations CalSWEC Graduate,

You have completed your employment payback for the IV-E stipends you received while pursuing your MSW degree. We at CalSWEC, specifically Drs. Lorraine Midanik, Sherrill Clark and Susan Jacquet, and doctoral candidate Amy Benton at the School of Social Welfare at UC Berkeley, are interested in your experiences during your employment payback period and enclose a survey we hope you will complete. We ask this of you whether you are still employed in a public child welfare agency or somewhere else.

By completing this survey, you will help us learn whether the IV-E program has prepared students effectively for work in public child welfare. We will be able to use this information to improve school curriculum and services for IV-E students. Public agencies may also use the information to improve working conditions in order to increase the retention rates of professional social workers employed there.

We ask a number of questions related to your personal and professional experiences since graduating. We also ask a number of questions related to your work environment conditions, (i.e supports available, stresses encountered, and job satisfaction). The questionnaire will require approximately 20 to 30 minutes of your time to complete.

This research presents minimal risk to you. Participation in research may involve a loss of privacy, but **your data will be handled as confidentially as possible**. For instance, should information that is not favorable come to the attention of your supervisor, such information might conceivably jeopardize your employment position. To protect your privacy, no one (supervisors, agency administrators etc.) will be informed of your responses. You are asked to provide identifying information on a page separate from the main text of the questionnaire. That sheet will be removed and a code number will be assigned to it. We ask your name to verify we have correctly located and received the questionnaire from a IV-E participant. Only those of us associated with the research will have access to the code. Your responses are totally confidential. Only aggregate data will be presented in any dissemination of findings. No participants will be identified in any reports and only research staff at CalSWEC will have access to the original questionnaires.

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to answer any of the questions asked. Whether or not you participate will in no way affect your job status.

We hope that you will complete the survey. Our results will be much stronger and our recommendations more reliable if most of the IV-E graduates respond. Your opinions are important and will help us understand public child welfare agencies and working conditions there.

If you have any questions about your rights or treatment as a participant in this research project, please contact the University of California at Berkeley's Committee for Protection of Human Subjects at (510) 642-7461, or e-mail [subjects@berkeley.edu](mailto:subjects@berkeley.edu). If you have any questions about the survey or the study, please contact Susan Jacquet at (510) 643-9846 or [sjacquet@berkeley.edu](mailto:sjacquet@berkeley.edu). Your thoughts and opinions are important to us and we appreciate your help with this survey.

Sincerely,

*Sherrill J. Clark*

*Susan Jacquet*

*Amy D Benton*

Sherrill J. Clark, MSW, PhD.

Susan E. Jacquet, PhD

Amy Benton, MSW

NOTE: If you would prefer to complete the survey online, email Amy Benton at [ymanotneb@berkeley.edu](mailto:ymanotneb@berkeley.edu)

University of California, Berkeley • School of Social Welfare • Marchant Building, Suite 420 • 6701 San Pablo • Berkeley, CA 94720-7420  
(telephone) 510.642.9272 (fax) 510.642.8573 (web) <http://calswec.berkeley.edu>

**California Social Work Education Center**

University of California at Berkeley

School of Social Welfare

**SECTION I of III: YOUR WORK EXPERIENCES**

**In this section we ask about your work experiences such as general information about your clients and caseload, the kind and level of supports you received, the work stresses you encountered and your thoughts about public child welfare.**

**NOTE: For those no longer employed in a public child welfare agency, please answer the remaining questions in this survey as they apply to your experiences in the public child welfare agency where you completed your employment obligation.**

**1. Are you currently employed in the same agency where you worked when you completed your employment obligation?**

Please check **ONE**

\_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO

**If you responded “YES” to the above question, please skip to question 4 below.**

mm / dd / yyyy

**2. When did you begin your new job?** \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

(If you do not know the day, please enter the month and year)

**3. Please check **ONE** of the following service areas which BEST REPRESENTS the primary focus of your new job?**

\_\_\_\_\_ aging

\_\_\_\_\_ mental health

\_\_\_\_\_ chemical and/or alcohol abuse

\_\_\_\_\_ occupational/industrial

\_\_\_\_\_ public child welfare

\_\_\_\_\_ policy/planning agency

\_\_\_\_\_ child/family welfare (non profit/private)

\_\_\_\_\_ schools

\_\_\_\_\_ corrections/criminal justice system

\_\_\_\_\_ private practice

\_\_\_\_\_ disabilities

\_\_\_\_\_ other \_\_\_\_\_  
(please specify)

\_\_\_\_\_ medical/health

**4. State your most recent public child welfare payroll title:** \_\_\_\_\_

5. In the agency where you completed your employment obligation, were you a member of a representative union?

\_\_\_\_\_ YES                      \_\_\_\_\_ NO

6. Please denote all the service areas/departments you worked in during your employment obligation in public child welfare (check all that apply). In addition, given that some workers may assume more than one responsibility at any given time or move between departments or service areas during their employment, please indicate in the spaces provided the time period(s) that you worked in each service area.

	From (start date) (mm/dd/yyyy)	To (end date) (mm/dd/yyyy)
_____ Emergency Response / Child Protection (CPS)	From _____	To _____
_____ Dependency Investigation / Court Services	From _____	To _____
_____ Family Maintenance	From _____	To _____
_____ Family Reunification	From _____	To _____
_____ Adoptions / Permanency Planning	From _____	To _____
_____ Foster Care	From _____	To _____
_____ Family Preservation	From _____	To _____
_____ Other _____	From _____	To _____
(please specify)		

7. What is/was your annual salary? \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**8. On average, how many hours per week do/did you work in your public child welfare job?**

\_\_\_\_\_ (# of hours)

9. Please indicate the percent of your work week that you do/did devote to the following:  
(make sure the figures add to 100 percent)

\_\_\_\_\_ % Direct services for/with clients  
 \_\_\_\_\_ % Supervision/Consultation/Training  
 \_\_\_\_\_ % Management/Planning/Evaluation/Research  
 \_\_\_\_\_ % Community Organization/Advocacy/Education  
 \_\_\_\_\_ % Paperwork / Computer Work  
 \_\_\_\_\_ % Other

(please specify)

10. On average, PER MONTH, how large was / is your caseload? \_\_\_\_\_ # of families / cases  
 \_\_\_\_\_ # of children

11. Do/did you think your caseload is/was: \_\_\_\_\_ too small  
 Please check **ONE** \_\_\_\_\_ about right  
 \_\_\_\_\_ too large

12. Please describe, to the best of your ability, the race/ethnicity of clients you served while fulfilling your contractual obligations for your IV-E stipend by providing the proportions in each of the following categories (make sure the figures add to 100 percent):

- (A) African/ African American \_\_\_\_\_ %  
 (B) American Indian \_\_\_\_\_ %  
 (C) Asian American/ Filipino/ Pacific Islander \_\_\_\_\_ %  
 (D) Caucasian \_\_\_\_\_ %  
 (E) Hispanic/Latino \_\_\_\_\_ %  
 (F) Mixed \_\_\_\_\_ %  
 (G) Other \_\_\_\_\_ %  
 = 100% TOTAL

Please check **ONE** for each question

	Yes	Unsure	No
13. Would you recommend your agency to others looking for employment in social work?	_____	_____	_____
14. Would you recommend public child welfare services to others looking for employment in social work?	_____	_____	_____
15. If you were not contractually obligated to remain in public child welfare for each year of IV-E funding received, would you have left or considered leaving public child welfare earlier?	_____	_____	_____

**If you are no longer employed in a public child welfare agency skip to question 18 on the next page.**

16. Taking everything into consideration, how likely is it that you will make a genuine effort to find a new job with another employer within the next year? Please check **ONE**

- \_\_\_\_\_ (A) NOT LIKELY: I plan to stay at this job for now.  
 (if checked, please skip to **question #19** on **page 5**)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (B) SOMEWHAT LIKELY: I am looking into other jobs.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (C) LIKELY: I am applying for other jobs.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (D) VERY LIKELY: I have accepted another job.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (E) I am retired or will retire in the next 2 years  
 (if checked, please skip to **question #19** on **page 5**)

17. If you are “somewhat” to “very likely” to seek alternative employment what is the likelihood that you will seek employment in another public child welfare agency?

Please Check **ONE**

- \_\_\_\_\_ (A) NOT LIKELY  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (B) SOMEWHAT LIKELY  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (C) LIKELY  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (D) VERY LIKELY

18. If you are “likely” or “very likely” to seek alternative employment within the next year or you have already sought employment or are employed outside public child welfare, please circle the number to the right of each statement which best represents the degree of importance each has (or had) in your decision to seek alternative employment, where:

**1** = Very Unimportant; **2** = Unimportant; **3** = Neither; **4** = Important; **5** = Very Important

	Very Unimportant			Very Important	
(A) Changes in my family situation.....	1	2	3	4	5
(B) A desire to further my education.....	1	2	3	4	5
(C) A desire or need to live in a different location.....	1	2	3	4	5
(D) Dissatisfaction w/ my current job/work environment.....	1	2	3	4	5
(E) A desire enter or prepare myself for private practice.....	1	2	3	4	5
(F) Changes in my career goals.....	1	2	3	4	5
(G) Feeling “burned out” or over stressed.....	1	2	3	4	5
(H) The availability of other jobs.....	1	2	3	4	5
(I) A desire for greater pay and benefits.....	1	2	3	4	5



**The next several questions ask about some of the supportive persons that you may have relied on as a child welfare worker.**

**19. How much can / did you rely on the following people when things get / got tough at work?**

	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much
(A) Your immediate supervisor.....	1	2	3	4
(B) Other supervisors / managers at work.....	1	2	3	4
(C) Peers at work.....	1	2	3	4
(D) Your friends and relatives.....	1	2	3	4
(E) Your spouse or partner.....	1	2	3	4
				5
				(no relationship)

**20. How willing are/were each of the following people to listen to your work-related problems?**

	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much
(A) Your immediate supervisor.....	1	2	3	4
(B) Other supervisors / managers at work.....	1	2	3	4
(C) Peers at work.....	1	2	3	4
(D) Your friends and relatives.....	1	2	3	4
(E) Your spouse or partner.....	1	2	3	4
				5
				(no relationship)

**21. How helpful are/were each of the following people to you in getting your job done?**

	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much
(A) Your immediate supervisor.....	1	2	3	4
(B) Other supervisors / managers at work.....	1	2	3	4
(C) Peers at work.....	1	2	3	4

**22. Please indicate how true each of the following statements is of your immediate supervisor.**

	Not at all True	Not too True	Somewhat True	Very True
(A) My supervisor is competent in doing (her/his) job.....	1	2	3	4
(B) My supervisor is very concerned about the welfare of those under him/her.....	1	2	3	4
(C) My supervisor gives information when I need it.....	1	2	3	4
(D) My supervisor shows approval when I have done well.....	1	2	3	4
(E) My supervisor is willing to help me complete difficult tasks.....	1	2	3	4
(F) My supervisor is warm and friendly when I have problems.....	1	2	3	4

**23. Please identify the highest academic degree obtained by your immediate supervisor.**

Degree

Discipline

\_\_\_\_\_

## SECTION II of III: WORK CONDITIONS AND EXPERIENCES

**The following items concern your beliefs about jobs in general. They do not refer only to your job in public child welfare.**

**24.** Please rate the level of agreement that you have with each item where:

1 = Disagree very much; 2 = Disagree moderately; 3 = Disagree slightly; 4 = Agree slightly;  
5 = Agree moderately; 6 = Agree very much.

	Disagree very much			Agree very much		
1. A job is what you make of it. ....	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. On most jobs, people can pretty much accomplish whatever they set out to accomplish.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. If you know what you want out of a job, you can find a job that gives it to you.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. If employees are unhappy with a decision made by their boss, they should do something about it.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. Getting the job you want is mostly a matter of luck.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. Making money is primarily a matter of good fortune.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. Most people are capable of doing their jobs well if they make the effort.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. In order to get a really good job, you need to have family members or friends in high places.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. Promotions are usually a matter of good fortune .....	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. When it comes to landing a really good job, who you know is more important than what you know.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. Promotions are given to employees who perform well on the job....	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. To make a lot of money you have to know the right people.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. It takes a lot of luck to be an outstanding employee on most jobs....	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. People who perform their jobs well generally get rewarded.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. Most employees have more influence on their supervisors than they think they do.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. The main difference between people who make a lot of money and people who make a little money is luck .....	1	2	3	4	5	6

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The next series of questions in this section ask about the quality of your work experiences, your thoughts and feelings about support, stresses and positive and negative experiences associated with your employment in public child welfare services.

Please remember that your responses will be kept confidential. Neither your supervisor nor your agency will be advised of your assessment (although you are free to discuss your responses with anyone you wish). Any report of your responses will be in aggregate form with the responses of other IV-E graduates (who will not be identified). Your responses to these questions are important in helping us understand the experiences of MSWs in public child welfare agencies and the influences such experiences have on career and employment decisions.

## 25. Human Services Survey

The purpose of this survey is to discover how various persons in the human services or helping professions view their jobs and the people with whom they work closely. Because persons in a wide variety of occupations will answer this survey, it uses the term clients to refer to the people for whom you provide your service, care, treatment, or instruction. When answering this survey please think of these people as recipients of the service you provide, even though you may use another term in your work.

On the following page there are 22 statements of job-related feelings. Please read each statement carefully and decide if you ever feel this way about your job. If you have never had this feeling, write a "0" (zero) before the statement. If you have had this feeling, indicate how often you feel it by writing the number (from 1 to 6) that best describes how frequently you feel that way. An example is shown below.

### Example:

HOW OFTEN:

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Never	A few times a year or less	Once a month or less	a few times a month	Once a week	A few times a week	Every day

HOW OFTEN

0 - 6          Statement:

\_\_\_\_\_ I feel depressed at work.

If you never feel depressed at work, you would write the number "0" (zero) under the heading "HOW OFTEN." If you rarely feel depressed at work (a few times a year or less), you would write the number "1." If your feelings of depression are fairly frequent (a few times a week, but not daily) you would write a "5."

**HOW OFTEN:**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Never	A few times a year or less	Once a month or less	a few times a month	Once a week	A few times a week	Every day

**HOW OFTEN**

0 - 6

Statements:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ I feel emotionally drained from my work.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ I feel used up at the end of the workday.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ I feel fatigued when I get up in the morning and have to face another day on the job.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ I can easily understand how my clients feel about things.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ I feel I treat some clients as if they were impersonal objects.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Working with people all day is really a strain for me.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ I deal very effectively with the problems of my clients.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ I feel burned out from my work.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ I feel I'm positively influencing other people's lives through my work.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ I've become more callous toward people since I took this job.
11. \_\_\_\_\_ I worry that this job is hardening me emotionally.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ I feel very energetic.
13. \_\_\_\_\_ I feel frustrated by my job.
14. \_\_\_\_\_ I feel I'm working too hard on my job.
15. \_\_\_\_\_ I don't really care what happens to some clients.
16. \_\_\_\_\_ Working with people directly puts too much stress on me.
17. \_\_\_\_\_ I can easily create a relaxed atmosphere with my clients.
18. \_\_\_\_\_ I feel exhilarated after working closely with my clients.
19. \_\_\_\_\_ I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job.
20. \_\_\_\_\_ I feel like I'm at the end of my rope.
21. \_\_\_\_\_ In my work, I deal with emotional problems very calmly.
22. \_\_\_\_\_ I feel clients blame me for some of their problems.

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**26. Please circle the number** to the right of each situation which best represents the degree of stress each situation produces for you where:

1 = not at all stressful; 2 = a little stressful; 3 = moderately stressful; 4 = very stressful

	Level of Stress				
	Not at all Stressful	A little stressful	Moderately stressful	Very stressful	Not Applicable
(A) Providing backup for another worker.....	1	2	3	4	N/A
(B) Answering phone calls at night.....	1	2	3	4	N/A
(C) Handling crisis calls.....	1	2	3	4	N/A
(D) Making home visits in a high-crime area.....	1	2	3	4	N/A
(E) Making home visits in a rural or isolated area...	1	2	3	4	N/A
(F) Visiting the home of a client who is known or suspected to be violent .....	1	2	3	4	N/A
(G) Being threatened with bodily harm.....	1	2	3	4	N/A
(H) Needing to work overtime.....	1	2	3	4	N/A
(I) Visiting clients during bad weather conditions...	1	2	3	4	N/A
(J) Recommending removal of child from the home	1	2	3	4	N/A
(K) Appearing in court.....	1	2	3	4	N/A
(L) Seeing severely abused children.....	1	2	3	4	N/A
(M) Recommending termination of parental rights..	1	2	3	4	N/A
(N) Seeing clients' difficult living conditions.....	1	2	3	4	N/A
(O) Death of a child (in your or another worker's caseload).....	1	2	3	4	N/A
(P) Other _____ (please specify)	1	2	3	4	N/A
(Q) Other _____ (please specify)	1	2	3	4	N/A

27. The following items may be characteristic of employment or practice experiences. Please rate the level of satisfaction you have with each item where:

1= Very dissatisfied; 2 = Somewhat dissatisfied; 3 = Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied;  
4= Somewhat satisfied; 5 = Very satisfied

	Very <u>dissatisfied</u>			Very satisfied	
(A) Support and recognition from my supervisor.....	1	2	3	4	5
(B) The level of gratitude expressed by clients.....	1	2	3	4	5
(C) Opportunities for personal growth and development.....	1	2	3	4	5
(D) Support and recognition from co-workers.....	1	2	3	4	5
(E) Satisfying relationships with clients.....	1	2	3	4	5
(F) My salary .....	1	2	3	4	5
(G) The non-salary benefits I receive.....	1	2	3	4	5
(H) Opportunities for promotion.....	1	2	3	4	5
(I) My clients' success in reaching goals.....	1	2	3	4	5
(J) Opportunities for improving my knowledge and skills...	1	2	3	4	5
(K) The physical surroundings of the agency.....	1	2	3	4	5
(L) Support and recognition from clients.....	1	2	3	4	5
(M) My personal feelings of accomplishment.....	1	2	3	4	5
(N) Recognition from other professionals.....	1	2	3	4	5
(O) Size of my caseload.....	1	2	3	4	5
(P) The amount of paperwork.....	1	2	3	4	5
(Q) The authority to make professional decisions.....	1	2	3	4	5
(R) Opportunity to make a difference in a client's life .....	1	2	3	4	5
(S) A flexible schedule.....	1	2	3	4	5
(T) The ability to work outside an office.....	1	2	3	4	5
(U) The opportunity to work intensively with clients.....	1	2	3	4	5
(V) All in all how satisfied are / were you with your job?...	1	2	3	4	5

**28.** Use the scales provided to respond to each question. **CIRCLE ONE ANSWER** to each question.

(A) In your work as a child welfare employee, how much influence do you believe you personally have to positively affect the clients you serve?

- 1 = No influence
- 2 = A little influence
- 3 = Usually some influence
- 4 = Much influence

(B) In your work as a child welfare employee, how would you rate the professional knowledge and skills you possess that you consider important for accomplishing positive outcomes with the clients you serve?

- 1 = Typically inadequate
- 2 = Somewhat inadequate
- 3 = Typically adequate
- 4 = Highly adequate

(C) When you consider the clients you serve as a child welfare employee, how much personal responsibility do you believe you have over their general well being and quality of life?

- 1 = No responsibility
- 2 = Some responsibility
- 3 = Quite a bit of responsibility
- 4 = A large amount of responsibility

(D) In your work as a child welfare employee, how would you describe the success you have in accomplishing objectives and goals for the clients you serve?

- 1 = No success
- 2 = A little success
- 3 = Usually some success
- 4 = A high degree of success

(E) How important is your personal success in your professional work with clients in determining whether you will remain employed with public child welfare services in the future?

- 1 = Not important
- 2 = Somewhat important
- 3 = Important
- 4 = Highly important

**SECTION III of III: PERSONAL INFORMATION**

**This section asks for information about you. (For all the following items, please place the appropriate answer in the space provided to the right of each question.)**

month / year

**29.** What is your date of birth? \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

**30.** What is your sex?    (A) FEMALE            (B) MALE            \_\_\_\_\_

**31.** Regarding your ethnicity, do you identify as Hispanic or Latino?    \_\_\_\_\_ YES            \_\_\_\_\_ NO

**32.** What is your race/ethnicity? Please **CHECK ALL** that apply.

\_\_\_\_\_ (A) African/African American/Black

\_\_\_\_\_ (B) American Indian

\_\_\_\_\_ (C) Asian American/Filipino/ Pacific Islander

\_\_\_\_\_ (D) Caucasian/White

\_\_\_\_\_ (E) Hispanic/Latino

\_\_\_\_\_ (F) Mixed \_\_\_\_\_ (Please Specify)

\_\_\_\_\_ (G) Other \_\_\_\_\_ (Please Specify)

**33.** CHECK ONE of the following income categories, which best describes your family's socioeconomic position during your predominate growing-up period.

\_\_\_\_ (A) Lower-Lower Income    \_\_\_\_ (D) Lower-Middle Income    \_\_\_\_ (G) Lower-Upper Income

\_\_\_\_ (B) Middle-Lower Income    \_\_\_\_ (E) Middle-Middle Income    \_\_\_\_ (H) Middle-Upper Income

\_\_\_\_ (C) Upper-Lower Income    \_\_\_\_ (F) Upper-Middle Income    \_\_\_\_ (I) Upper-Upper Income

~~~~~ Thank you. You have completed the main body of this survey. ~~~~~

**PLEASE READ FURTHER:**



CalSWEC surveys all California MSW students at the start and upon completion of their graduate studies in order to solicit information regarding student attitudes and views about the profession, their desire to work with various populations, and their experiences in graduate school. You may have completed one of these surveys at the start or the end of your graduate studies. If you would like to read the results of any of these surveys, please be sure to visit our website at <http://calswec.berkeley.edu>.

We are interested in linking the findings as they apply to Title IV-E recipients from this study with earlier findings generated from the anonymous surveys given to MSW students at the start and upon completion of their studies. We hope that this linkage will advance our understanding of the influences of students' views about the profession, child welfare, and public social services on job retention.

If you are willing, please provide the unique code below that will link your responses to this survey with responses made to surveys you may have completed during your graduate studies. **By doing so you will be giving CalSWEC consent to identify you with your responses on those surveys.** However, as with this survey, your responses are totally confidential. Your name will not be placed on any of the questionnaires. Only aggregate data will be presented in any dissemination of findings. No participants will be identified in any reports. **The provision of your unique code is entirely voluntary. Whether or not you complete your code below will in no way affect how your responses to this survey are received.** Thank you for considering this request.

#### THIS IS HOW IT WORKS:

In these spaces write the first three letters of your mother's maiden name.    \_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_  
(example: If her name is/was Alice Smith, the letters are SMI )

In these spaces write the first three letters of your mother's first name.    \_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_  
(example: If her name is/was Alice Smith, the letters are ALI )

Note: If the name has fewer than three letters, fill in the letters from the left and add 0 (zero) in the remaining space(s) on the right].  
[example: If her name is/was Lu We, the codes would be LU0 and WE0 .)

In these spaces write the numbers for the day you were born    \_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_  
(example: if you were born on the second day of the month, write in 02;  
if you were born on the 23rd, write in 23.)

Transfer the Unique ID Code you just created in order:

\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\*

**Please read the next page.**



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University of  
California, Berkeley  
University of  
California, Los Angeles  
University of  
Southern California  
58 Counties  
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Directors Association  
California Mental  
Health Directors  
Association  
California Department  
of Social Services  
Foundations  
NASW,  
California Chapter

Thank you for your help and cooperation. Your participation in this survey is greatly appreciated.

**Please place the completed questionnaire in the pre-addressed postage paid envelope provided.**

Should you have any questions about this questionnaire or study, please feel free to contact Susan Jacquet at (510) 643-9846 or by e-mail at [sjacquet@berkeley.edu](mailto:sjacquet@berkeley.edu).

Given that work conditions as well as a worker's roles, thoughts and feelings about their job may change over time, this is the first of three questionnaires you may receive over the next two years. Should your address change in the future and should you like to continue to participate in this study please fill out the enclosed change of address post card (pre-addressed and postage paid).

Further, Dean Lorraine Midanik, Drs. Sherrill Clark and Susan Jacquet, and Doctoral candidate Amy Benton at the School of Social Welfare at UC Berkeley would like to hear more about some of your experiences and thoughts about public child welfare services. More specifically, we are interested in exploring the same issues detailed in the questions contained within this survey, however, in a more open ended fashion during a telephone interview. Again, although we will know your name, **your responses are totally confidential**. Only aggregate data will be presented in any dissemination of findings. No participants will be identified in any reports. Although your identity will be known at the time of the phone interview, only your study number will appear on any notes taken by the researcher at the time of the phone interview. No one, apart from the researchers will have access to these notes.

**If you would be willing to participate in a telephone interview with one of our researchers please sign the statement below.**

-----  
I agree to be interviewed by phone. I understand that any questions will address my experiences, thoughts and feelings about working in public child welfare. I also understand that my comments may be used in written reports but that I will not be identified. No identifying information will ever be presented in the dissemination of any findings related to the questionnaire I have just completed or the telephone interview I agree to participate in.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # (where I can be contacted) \_\_\_\_\_

General days and times when I prefer to be contacted \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

---

University of California, Berkeley • School of Social Welfare • Marchant Building, Suite 420 • 6701 San Pablo • Berkeley, CA 94720-7420

Telephone: 510.642.9272 Fax: 510.642.8573 Web: <http://calswec.berkeley.edu>

Appendix C

**CPHS Letter**

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**OFFICE FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS**

University of California, Berkeley  
2150 Shattuck Avenue, Suite 313  
Berkeley, CA 94704 -5940

**(510) 642-7461**

Fax: (510) 643-6272

Website: <http://cphs.berkeley.edu>

FWA#00006252

June 25, 2009

SHERRILL CLARK <sjclark@berkeley.edu>

Social Welfare

6701 San Pablo, Ste 420 MC# 7420

Berkeley, CA 94720-7420

**RE: Approval of CPHS Protocol #2004-6-68**

“Factors Influencing the Retention of Public Child Welfare Workers - Continuation of Faculty Funded Research by CalSWEC” - non-UCB Affiliate Research - - Social Welfare

Dear Dr. Clark:

Thank you for submitting an application for continued approval of the above-referenced protocol. Your submission has been reviewed and approved on an expedited basis, under category F (7) of the federal regulations, for one year or less, effective 6/24/2009. This approval will expire on 6/23/2010.

In addition, the following amendments were reviewed and approved on under expedited review category 45 CFR 46.110 (b)(2):

1. Addition of “Retrospective Study of CalSWEC Graduates’ Career Paths” as phase two of the longitudinal study.
2. Key Personnel changes: Remove: Meredith Denton; Add Charity (Samantha) Fitzgerald, Kazumi Uota, and Lorena Cortez.
3. Revise Protocol Narrative: (a) to reflect the above changes; (b) minor revisions to conform with current (February 2008) form version; (c) update Unanticipated Problem/Adverse Event Management and Reporting (section 13) to reflect current CPHS Policies and Procedures.

The number of this approval is **2004-6-68**. Please refer to this number in all future correspondence.

Please note the following:

1. The attached stamped, approved consent materials must be used for the consenting of any new subjects.

*Continuation/Renewal:* Approximately 8 weeks before the expiration of this approval, OPHS will send you a courtesy reminder. Applications for continuation review should be submitted no later than 6 weeks prior to the expiration date of the current approval to allow sufficient time for the renewal process. *Note: It is the responsibility of the Lead Investigator to submit for renewed approval in a timely manner.* In keeping with federal regulations, *if approval expires, all research activity (including data analysis) must cease until re-approval from CPHS has been received.* Before applying, please check current CPHS guidelines, instructions and forms available at <http://cphs.berkeley.edu>.

*Amendments/Modifications:* Any change in the design, conduct, or key personnel of this research must be approved by the CPHS **prior** to implementation. (For more information, see “[Process for Submission & Review of Applications](#)” and “[Application Forms & Informed Consent](#)” on CPHS website).

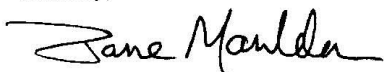
*Unanticipated Problems and Adverse Events:* If any study subject experiences an unanticipated problem involving risks to subjects or others, and/or a serious adverse event, the CPHS must be informed *promptly* within no more than *one week* (7 calendar days), and receive a written report within no more than *two weeks* (14 calendar days), of recognition/ notification

of the event. (For more information on definitions and reporting requirements related to this topic, see "[Adverse Event and Unanticipated Problem Reporting](#)" on the CPHS website).

If you have any questions about the above, please contact the Office for the Protection of Human Subjects staff at (510) 642-7461; Fax (510) 643-6272; or e-mail [ophs@berkeley.edu](mailto:ophs@berkeley.edu).

Thank you for your cooperation and your commitment to the protection of human subjects in research.

Sincerely,



Jane Mauldon, Ph.D.  
Chair, Committee for Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS-I)  
Associate Professor, Goldman School of Public Policy

JM:dwh

Cc: Graduate Division - SID # various <[degrees@berkeley.edu](mailto:degrees@berkeley.edu)>  
SPO# 025069-003 <[spo\\_acuc\\_ophs@lists.berkeley.edu](mailto:spo_acuc_ophs@lists.berkeley.edu)>  
Susan Jacquet <[sjacquet@berkeley.edu](mailto:sjacquet@berkeley.edu)>  
Amy Benton - SID# 17738086 <[ymanotneb@berkeley.edu](mailto:ymanotneb@berkeley.edu)>  
Richard Smith - SID# 17908636 <[smithrichardj@berkeley.edu](mailto:smithrichardj@berkeley.edu)>  
Maria Hernandez - SID# 1928826 <[hernandezm@berkeley.edu](mailto:hernandezm@berkeley.edu)>  
Kazumi Uota - SID# 17049468 <[kazumiyota@gmail.com](mailto:kazumiyota@gmail.com)>  
Charity (Samantha) Fitzgerald <[s-fitzgerald@berkeley.edu](mailto:s-fitzgerald@berkeley.edu)>  
Lorena Cortez <[lcortez@berkeley.edu](mailto:lcortez@berkeley.edu)>